



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Mark 14: 53-65

Mark

"Christ Before the Sanhedrin"

TRANSCRIPT

Our text this morning is Mark chapter 14, and we'll look at verses 53 through 65. Beginning with verse 53:

They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together. Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. Some stood up and began to give false testimony against Him, saying, "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'" Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent. The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

Now, I'm not going to develop this in the lesson itself, but I would like to point something out: the chief priest here is Caiaphas, and he refers to God as the Blessed One, which is a tradition among the Jews that is even current today among the religious Jews, in which they believe in reverence to God that they should not even mention His name. And so rather than saying His name, Yahweh, or as we sometimes say it, Jehovah, the personal name of God, they will say, Adonai, which

means Lord. And even among the ultra-orthodox Jews, they've gone a step further and say Hashem, the name. They won't even say Adonai. And so, it's interesting that we see that here in Caiaphas, because he's showing a great deal of piety. He's honoring God by saying "the Blessed One." And yet, we see in that, the gross hypocrisy of this man who, while speaking of God as the Blessed One, is putting the Blessed One on trial.

Now, in his lesson on this passage in the Book of Matthew, Dr. Johnson develops this to some extent and develops the character of Caiaphas, and develops it as a man who he describes as a "time server," a man who fits his behavior and his ideas to the pattern of his time. A man who lives for time and not for eternity, and he is a classic example of that. That's what we see here in this man. I won't bring it out in the lesson, but I bring it out here because I think it's important to bear in mind, that this is characteristic of the whole Sanhedrin. Men who lived for the moment, who lived for time, and in all of that showed a great deal of hypocrisy.

"Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers received Him with slaps in the face.

May the Lord bless this reading of His word and bless our time of study together. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for the privilege we have to come together this morning to worship You in song and to study Your word together. We pray that You would bless our hearts, that You would open them to Your truth, that You would help us to think through the material that we are considering this morning, and prepare us through it for the week that is ahead of us.

We know, Father, that You sanctify us. You make us like Your Son through the study of Scripture. As the Holy Spirit takes that, opens our hearts to receive it, and applies it to our lives, and gives us the desire to live in faithfulness to it. And so,

we pray that You would cause that effect to occur within us. Prepare us for opportunities that You may give us to present Christ to others. May we have the boldness to do that. May we speak clearly. May our lives be lived in a way that's consistent with the testimony that we have our lips. We commit that to You, Lord, and pray that You'd use us. And we pray that our time would be beneficial together.

We pray that for Your church as it meets throughout this city and throughout the world. We pray that men and women would gather around the Scriptures and that You would cause them to grow in their knowledge of the Lord, and in their character as well. Bless Your church and bless us particularly. We pray that You'd give wisdom to each of us. Bless the elders and the deacons with wisdom and diligence in the tasks that You have given them at this church. Bless our Sunday schools. Bless the secretaries and the maintenance individuals. We pray that You'd bless all who apply themselves to the work of the Lord in this place. Bless those who use their gifts, that they would use them effectively.

We pray, Lord, for those who are in physical need and ask Your blessing upon them. Those who are sick. Those who are very seriously ill. We pray that You would give healing. We know that You are a God who heals. You are the great physician and You can heal very easily if it be Your will. And so, if it be Your will, Lord, we pray that we know Your will is that Your saints look to You, and they keep their eyes on Christ, and we pray that You would help those who are in difficulty do that.

Those who are in financial need, we pray that You'd bless them and make them know that You are with them and You are always with them, even in the midst of difficulty, and moments that challenge the faith.

We pray, Father, for our nation, as well as our church, and we pray that You'd bless our leaders at every level. At the national level and the local level, we pray that You'd give wisdom to them, and bless our land. We pray these things in our Savior's name and ask Your special blessing upon us now as we give our attention to the Scriptures, and as we sing our final hymn. May our hearts be prepared for this time together. May we be edified by it and may You be glorified. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] There are few events more dramatic, more riveting than a courtroom trial. People will line up early at the courthouse to get a seat, or watch their televisions, to follow the proceedings of famous trial, or a notorious trial of an individual. I can remember as a young boy watching with some interest the trial of Adolf Eichmann as it was broadcast over a television from a courtroom in Jerusalem, and listening to some of the emotional testimonies of that were given against him. Millions of Americans, probably many of you, tuned in daily to the Senate hearings on the Iran contra affair earlier, to watch the Watergate hearings. Earlier still, to see the McCarthy hearings.

Trials such as those of Alger Hiss, or the Rosenbergs, or Bruno Hauptmann, Sacco and Vanzetti. Famous trials that go throughout the century have produced such interest that books are still being written over the outcome of those trials and the guilt or the innocence of those involved. Some trials have even had major influence on history. The trial of Alfred Dreyfus in France was a catalyst for the Zionist movement in the late 19th century. Political fortunes have turned on such events.

But of all the great trials of history, from Socrates before the leaders of Athens, to Galileo before the inquisition, to Luther at Worms, no trial can compare to the trial of Christ, when the Son of God was brought before the bar of human justice. It was the greatest trial of history, the most significant trial of history. In that courtroom, revelations were made of Christ Himself, and revelations were made of man and his condition. Decisions were made that led to the turning point of history.

It was a very significant trial, the most significant trial of history, and it's the subject of our study this morning, the trial of Christ. Or to be more specific, the first trial of Christ, because there were actually two trials. One Jewish, and the other Roman. One was religious, in which the charge was blasphemy. The other was a civil trial in which the charge was treason. That was necessary because although the Jewish court could convict, it could not execute. Rome kept that authority for itself. It closely guarded the sword.

And so, the Jewish court had to seek Rome's agreement in a verdict in order for the execution to occur. And so, for that to happen, Pilate was drawn into this whole affair unwittingly and unwillingly. But his involvement was necessary if Christ was to be crucified.

Well, this morning, we are going to consider the first trial, the Jewish trial, a trial that from the outset was a travesty of justice. Whole books have been written on the irregularities of the Lord's trial before the Sanhedrin. We can only touch on a few of them, but I would like to mention three of those irregularities. The first, this trial was held at night, and that was contrary to Jewish law. And secondly, in a capital case, a verdict was not to be reached until the day after the trial. And yet, this verdict was reached during the trial itself. And third, the Lord was denied a defense attorney. In fact, He was called upon to testify against Himself.

All of these were irregularities, and there are many others that could be cited. The motivation for them was due in part at least to expediency. The authorities were in a hurry to get the conviction that they wanted in order to avoid a riot by the Lord's followers. It's why He was arrested at night. That's why these things took place under the cover of night. And also, it was not legitimate to execute criminals on the Sabbath. Christ was arrested on Friday. The Jewish day begins at sunset. And so, with the setting of the sun, Friday began. So, in order to convict Him, execute Him, and bury Him before the sun set, marking the onset of the Sabbath, they had to do things very quickly. And what made that all the more urgent is the fact that Roman officials, such as Pilate, worked very early in the morning. After that, in the latter part of the day, they refused to take any more cases. So, in order to involve Pilate in this and to get the Roman verdict that they needed, they had to work very hurriedly. Things were very urgent for them.

And so, we can see this and the events that unfold from the standpoint of expediency. And yet, that only partially explains the events that we look at here. This was not principally a political matter, but a spiritual one. As the Lord had told the authorities when they arrested Him in the garden, this hour and the power of darkness are yours. This is the power of darkness that we're looking at. The trial was their attempt to snuff out the light of the world, which is what Christ is. He had shined in the darkness and He had exposed them for what they were. He had exposed their sin, and so they ignore proper procedures in order to hastily convict Him in order to be rid of Him.

Now, Mark describes these events, but He doesn't describe all of the events. We know from John's account that there was a preliminary hearing before Annas, the former high priest, the father-in-law of Caiaphas. In fact, many thought of him as the

real high priest. The Romans had deposed him. And so, appointed his son-in-law to be high priest in his place. But Annas was really the power behind the priesthood and the power behind the Sanhedrin. And our Lord appeared first to him.

Now, Mark skips that and instead moves to the palace of Caiaphas following this meeting with Annas. And there, the Sanhedrin had assembled in a room upstairs. By this time, Peter had regained his composure. You remember that when the Lord was arrested, the disciples fled. They fled into the darkness, and many of them no doubt fled all the way over the Mount of Olives to Bethany where they went into hiding. But Peter, at some point, stops, regains his composure, and turns around and begins to follow the Lord. Mark speaks of this in verse 54, and he states that he "followed Him at some distance." At a safe distance. But he did follow Him. In fact, followed Him all the way into the courtyard of the high priest.

It was a spring night and the spring nights in the hills of Judea can be very cool. And so, the servants and the officers there were warming themselves around a charcoal fire. Peter slips in next to them to warm himself and seeks to maintain his secret of his identity. He was there in order to learn what would happen to the Lord in this trial. But before the sun would rise, he would learn more about himself than he knew before. Mark sets the stage for that at this point in verse 54.

But before describing the trial of Peter, he returns to the trial of Christ. It began with the gathering of evidence from various witnesses. But, a problem developed early on when the witnesses couldn't agree with one-another. The law required that the guilt of a man and the execution of a man be established upon the basis of two or more witnesses. While the council had desperately tried to find witnesses, they couldn't get even two witnesses that could give consistent testimony. They all contradicted each other. Now, that was the first round of testimony that proved worthless. And so, they brought in another group of witnesses with a specific charge.

Verse 58. "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'" Now, that's the charge that they made, but if you go through the gospels, you won't find a statement exactly like that. I say "you won't find one exactly like that," because there is a statement that's similar to this, and probably the statement that they were drawing upon. It's the

one that He made back in John chapter 2 verse 19, a statement that's made some two years before this event.

And there, He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up." Now, John goes on to explain that the temple that He was speaking of was not Herod's temple, but the temple of His body. He was speaking of the resurrection. They destroy His body. He will raise it up in three days. He says nothing about doing the destroying Himself, as the charge is said, attributes to Him. If His body is destroyed, He will raise it up. But they twist that to be a reference to the temple and that He was going to destroy it. And so, you can see the point of the accusation. It's that He is a defamer of the temple, which they held in high regard. In fact, they would make oaths upon the temple. They viewed it as that sacred. And so, they considered Him, this charge was put forth, charging Him with blasphemy, defaming the temple. But again, the charge proved invalid because again, their testimony wasn't consistent.

Now, it wasn't that there weren't enough witnesses in Jerusalem, that there wasn't enough evidence Christ. There was overwhelming evidence concerning the Lord. Judea, Galilee, Jerusalem were filled with witnesses to the person of Christ, to the character of Christ. The priests had already met many of these themselves. Numerous lepers had come into the temple throughout His ministry and they had said, "Jesus made me clean." Blind men had testified, "Jesus gave me sight." The deaf had said, "He made me hear." The lame said, "I was paralyzed and He made me walk." The list goes on of people. Men, women, children who had been healed. Lazarus could come forth and said, "He raised me from the dead." The temple police had already given testimony to His teaching. They had said, "Never did man speak the way this Man speaks." There were numerous witnesses that they could have found to testify about Christ, not the least of which were the prophets themselves who had written on Him.

But how many of the messianic prophecies did they examine? The Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2. Did they look into Jesus' place of birth? He was to be born of the house of David. He was a descendent of kings. That's what 2 Samuel 7 says. Did they search His genealogy? Did they interview Mary, who was there in the city? They could've asked His mother about these things. Did they

consider any of the many prophetic words of Scripture and the fulfillment of them in His life? Did they look into any of that? There's no evidence that they did.

What they had done was ignore all of that, round up whatever witnesses they could find to testify against Him in the short time that they had, and put a case together with a prearranged verdict in order to put Him to death. That was what they had done, and yet it was all proving fruitless because not one valid witness could be found to incriminate Him. Not one shred of evidence could be found against Him. And valuable time was being wasted as witnesses kept cancelling out their testimonies with inconsistent stories.

The Lord wasn't cooperating with all of this. Through it all, Jesus said not a word. He knew their purpose, and He knew that there was no purpose in His answering their challenges and trying to overturn them, because they weren't seeking the truth. They were seeking a conviction, and that was all.

So, He stood there in majestic silence, as someone has said, refusing to dignify their false charges with a response, though He certainly could've refuted them if that had been His desire. Earlier in chapter 12, on the so-called day of questions, He showed His skill in dealing with the cleverest questions that these men could ask. They spent the day trying their best to trap Him. And they failed miserably.

Now, He remains silent. He could've answered every charge that was brought against Him, but He didn't, and there was no need for Him to do that, no need for Him to speak in His own defense because the false witnesses were refuting themselves, exposing the trial for what it was: a mockery of justice.

And Caiaphas could see all of this happening. He could see the case against the Lord falling apart, as long as Christ remained silent, they couldn't twist His answers. As long as He remained silent, they couldn't trap Him in some statement that might in some way incriminate Him.

And so, sensing that this whole case was slipping out of his hands, Caiaphas took charge and began to personally interrogate the Lord. "Do You make no answer to what these men are testifying against You?" He asks. But again, the Lord remains silent. Didn't answer him a word.

And so, Caiaphas comes right to the point and asks: "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" The question was asked because he and the rest of the Sanhedrins suspected or they knew that Christ did regard Himself as the Messiah, and

with good reason. They knew that with good reason because throughout His ministry, He had indicated that He was the Messiah by His deeds, for one. And this courtroom procedure was proving that. His life was a sinless life. They could not find one shred of evidence or one witness to show any misconduct in His life. I dare say that if you or I were put on trial, someone could be found rather easily to find something that we had done that would incriminate us in some way.

But they could not. As hard as they searched, as much time and effort as they put into it, they could not find one witness against Him. So, His life was a testimony to the fact that He was the Messiah. His miracles were obvious testimonies to that, and there were multitudes of them. And, in addition to the miracles, there was His teaching, His powerful teaching. He had alluded to it in His parables. He taught numerous parables on the kingdom of God and alluded to His messiahship there. And earlier in this very week, He quoted Psalm 118 to indicate that He was the stone which the builders rejected. In His Olivet Discourse in chapter 13, He said to His disciples that He was the Son of man who would come in the clouds, who would come in power and glory, who would come as the Messiah. And before that, He had told the woman of Samaria in John chapter 4, the woman at the well, that He is the Messiah.

But He had not directly declared that to the Jews, to the Jewish people as a nation, or to the leaders specifically. He had not directly said, "I am the Christ." And there are a number of reasons for that. The nation was not ready for that revelation. They had an understanding of the Messiah. They knew He would be a king, and they knew He would conquer. But, they didn't go beyond that. They did not understand that the Messiah must suffer and die, that before the king could come to reign, He must be a suffering servant.

And so, with that misunderstanding or that lack of full knowledge or conviction about the Messiah, if He had given the revelation that He is the Messiah, if He had openly declared Himself to be that, then it would've fanned the flames of misguided nationalistic enthusiasm, much of which was already witnessed in the triumphal entry just a few days before when they hailed Him as the Messiah. And had that occurred, that would've provoked a response from Rome, and it would've given the authorities grounds to move against Him before His hour.

And as you know, as you read through particularly the Gospel of John, you see so much of our Lord's actions and decisions determined by the fact that His hour had not yet come. And so, He revealed Himself as the Messiah, but only indirectly to the Jews

Until now. Because now His hour had come. This was the time to speak plainly. And so, to the question that Caiaphas asked: are You the Christ? He speaks directly. And in words that were unmistakably clear, He says, "I am." Those are words that an hour earlier had driven the soldiers to the ground. Words with power. Words that go back to the burning bush where the Lord God revealed Himself to Moses with that statement: I am who I am. I am the self-sufficient God. I am the Creator. I am the Lord of history. I am the one who will destroy Pharaoh and his army. I am the one who will deliver Israel from bondage. I am.

And here, the Lord states that. And yet, He restrains the power of those words, which were witnessed just an hour or so earlier. But if any failed to make the connection between Jesus and the Lord of the Old Testament, then He makes the connection very plain by adding in verse 62: "And you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." His answer here is a combination of two verses in the Old Testament: Psalm 110 verse 1 and Daniel chapter 7 and verse 13.

In Psalm 110, the verse reads: "The Lord says to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.'" It is a Psalm in which David recognizes his king. David the king of Israel has a king over him, and this king is the Lord. His king is the one who sits at the right hand of the Father. And so, He is one who is greater than any mortal. His king is God. His king is a divine king.

Now, one truth that the Old Testament consistently insists on is that there is only one God. The New Testament agrees, but it reveals that one God as existing or subsisting in three persons or three agents. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. These three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. There's not one person that's greater than the other, not one person of the Godhead that has more deity than the other. They are all equal in their deity, equal in their power, equal in their glory. That is the doctrine of the Trinity, and it is fundamental doctrine of Christianity. Without it, there is no Christianity. Without the doctrine of the Trinity, we are no different than any other religion. It's fundamental to

Christianity, but it is a very difficult doctrine to understand. There is a great deal of mystery. Who can understand God in His fullness?

I think JI Packer is right when he says that the "historic formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity seeks to circumscribe and safeguard this mystery, not explain it. That is beyond us." It is, but there are things about it that we can understand. Now, the word Trinity is a theological term derived from a Latin word meaning "threeness." And while the word is not found in the Bible, it does express biblical truth. The New Testament clearly represents God as a Trinity. You see this at the end of Matthew when the Lord is giving the great commission. He sends His disciples in to the whole world to make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Three persons, all equal to one another.

We see that clearly in the New Testament, but we also see it in the Old Testament as well. It's clear from Psalm 110. It's not emphasized in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament, but the teaching is there. Psalm 110. "The Lord said to David's Lord." Two Lords. "Sit at My right hand." So, they are separate persons, but they are equal in person. They are sitting beside each other. There are other passages as well.

We can't go through all of them, but one of the best passages in the Old Testament in which we see this is Isaiah 48 in which we read in verse 12: "Listen to me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called, I am He. I am the first and I am also the last. Surely, My hand founded the earth." Well, whose hand founded the earth? Who can say "I am the first; I am the last?" Only God can say that. So clearly, it's God that's speaking here. And yet, that same speaker in verse 16 says, "And now, the Lord God has sent Me and His Spirit." Well, He who is the first and the last, or we might add to that, the alpha and the omega, is sent by the Lord God. He's also sent His Spirit. All three persons of the Godhead are mentioned there. There are other passages that we could look at. Isaiah 63 verses 9 and 10 in which you have three persons mentioned there as well.

So, the idea of one God in three persons is not foreign to the Old Testament. And as Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin, He was claiming to be the second person of the Godhead by quoting Psalm 110. To that, He adds, Daniel 7 verse 13 in which Daniel describes what he saw in a night vision. And his words in that verse are, "Behold, with the clouds of heaven, one like a Son of Man was coming. And He

came up to the ancient of days, and was present before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom." It's a vision of a man in heaven, a king with power and authority of God, one who is coming in the clouds. And by joining these two ideas, that of a heavenly throne to a future coming, He affirmed that He was the one of whom those very well-known passages, well known to the Jews at least, the one that they were speaking of, He is the Son of Man. He is the Messiah.

It wasn't apparent as He stood before the Sanhedrin that He was the Messiah, that He is the Son of Man, that He is this glorious heavenly man. All they could see before them was a common carpenter from Galilee, one who, from all appearances, was helpless before them, who was at their mercy. But the Lord was speaking prophetically. He was looking beyond His crucifixion, looking beyond His resurrection to His ascension to heaven when He would be enthroned at the right hand of God, as Paul says, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

But He was looking to His return in making these statements. A return in power as a king and as a judge of all the earth, a coming in the clouds, a glorious coming. Daniel 7 is not an isolated passage. In fact, I think to understand Daniel's night vision, we have to understand a connection with Nebuchadnezzar's dream that's recorded in chapter 2 of the Book of Daniel in which he saw a great stone coming out of the sky and striking the golden image, this great golden image, and that stone is Christ. That image is a representation of all the empires of the world and the statement of that dream was that Christ would come and He would destroy all of the Gentile empires of this world, and He would fill the whole earth with His glory, with His presence, with His rule. He is the king of kings and will build His kingdom in the future, in the future. But, it will be a kingdom that's established on events of the past, the events that were unfolding that very night when He was arrested, a kingdom that will be established through the cross.

This trial and its consequences were necessary in order for those prophecies to occur. We've discussed this in past times of study in this book. The Lord made very clear to the disciples that before there could be a kingdom, there had to be the cross. And so, these events were necessary. They had to take place. His enthronement in heaven, his glorious return, the kingdom that He would establish are all based on His high priestly work on the cross. And so, as the Lord spoke, in His humble

appearance, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin sat in judgment upon Him. They saw Him in His humiliation, a condition that He willingly accepted in order to die for sinners, in order to purchase them for His kingdom in order to establish that kingdom. But He assures them that they will see Him in the future as the Son of Man in all of His glory, the glory of Daniel's heavenly dream.

In the future, they will see Him when He returns. And you might wonder: when will they do that? Because they didn't see Him. They went to the grave. They died, and He has still not come back. How could that prophecy be fulfilled? Well, it will be fulfilled in the future when they are raised to the last judgment. Then they will see Christ in all of His glory. Then, the roles will be reversed. Those who judged Him will be judged by Him at the great white throne.

There was a warning in all of this to these men. It's the warning of Scripture to them, but they failed to take it. The answer "I am" was enough for Caiaphas. That's what he wanted to hear. And when he heard it, he tore his clothes as a sign of grief over blasphemy. Now, that was a formal judicial act. In fact, the Talmud prescribes exactly how it's to be done. And so, it was an outward expression of grief. But in that, we see the hypocrisy of this man. Because inwardly, he wasn't grieved at all by what he heard. He was delighted by it. It's exactly what he wanted to hear. And so, because of that, he pronounces Christ guilty.

And all of the Sanhedrin agreed. They all condemned Him to be deserving of death, we read, verse 64. Then something quite astonishing occurred. All through the trial, the appearance of legality was maintained with a courtroom, a judge, witnesses, all of that that would go into bonafide trial. But when the sentence was passed, all formal adherence to the law broke down. The mask, as it were, fell off, and the real face of these judged showed itself, and they began to abuse Jesus. They began to spit at Him, and slap Him. They even made a sport of this by blindfolding Him and then beating Him with their fists and saying, "Prophecy!" Tell us who hit You. Show us that You're a prophet. It was a sadistic outpouring of violence and hatred.

You read this and you can't help but wonder: why? What had He done to any of these men that would cause such a malicious response? You could understand it if this was Barabbas, or some robber or some murderer who had touched their own lives and destroyed some family member, and with the conviction of guilt that this outpouring of bitterness would come forth. But this is not that at all. This is Jesus

Christ, the embodiment of God's love. The revelation of God and His love. God become man. The one of whom Isaiah wrote, "A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish." This is man's response to Him. His goodness and His grace are answered with spit and fists and mockery.

How do you explain that? I think you can only explain it as satanic. Do we need any greater evidence than this trial and beating to prove the words of the apostle John? The whole world lies in the power of the evil one. Men love the darkness rather than the light for their deeds were evil. The whole scene proves how wicked mankind is and how desperately it needs a Savior. We look at this scene, we reflect on it for any length of time , we can't help but be horrified by what took place. Horrified by it, but not with any self-righteousness, because it all has to do with far more than some long-dead Jews and Romans. It has to do with us. It gives us a real picture of our own hearts. This is not something typically Jewish. This is something typically characteristic of man in general.

You say, well, I've never done that. I've never abused anyone like that. Certainly not Christ. I think that's true. You've never done it. And yet, given enough time and given the right opportunity, any one of us could've committed this crime or worse crimes, if there are such. And so, as we look at these men, we should see ourselves apart from the grace of God and realize how great that grace is. That's the reason I mention it. Why bring something like that up? Because it points to what we really are in and of ourselves, the stuff that we're made of apart from the grace of God, that because of the grace of God, we have been changed, changed completely. We are now new creatures in Christ. We have new understanding, a new affection. We are new people. And not because of us, but because of Him. The change that He brought.

As was mentioned in the prayer this morning, we love Him because He first loved us. That is so true. So again, the trial proves how desperately man needs a Savior and how great the salvation that we receive is. And through it all, Christ proved that He is that Savior, the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. He didn't prophesy for them. He didn't raise a complaint against them. And in fulfillment of Isaiah's description: "Like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth." Fulfillment of that. He remained silent through all of this. He could've opened His mouth, and He could've brought this mock trial to a sudden end, as we've

mentioned. But He didn't. He opened not His mouth, except to give the one answer that condemned Him. And as a result, He was convicted of blasphemy and eventually sentenced to the cross.

Now, as we pointed out, the trial was illegal. It was a miscarriage of justice. But for all of that, the Lord did say that He was the Messiah. The one charge that they convicted Him with was something that He admitted to being true. Yes, He is the Messiah. He claimed to be God. If a person will not accept Him as God, will not accept His claims, then he too must render the verdict that these men rendered, that He is a blasphemer. We really are not left with any other option. There's no middle ground. Either He is the one He said He was, He is the Son of God, or He is a blasphemer. We can't say that He is a good moral teacher.

CS Lewis has said it very well in a rather well-known quote in his book, "Mere Christianity." He writes, "Either this man was and is the Son of God or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." The Jewish leaders at least understood that, and reached the verdict that He was an imposter, He was a blasphemer, and eventually had Him crucified as a common criminal between two thieves.

That was their verdict, but that was not the final verdict. After the suffering of the cross, God gave His verdict in the resurrection. That was the ultimate proof that Jesus is the eternal Son of God. As Paul writes in Romans 1 verses 3 and 4, He was born of the seed of David according to the flesh. He is of the line of the Messiah, of the kings, and He's a man, has a true human nature, declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.

The resurrection was God's public vindication of His Son. It was the divine endorsement of all that Christ said and did. The historical proof that He had not died in vain, but in fact that His death was a victory, a victory over sin, a victory over Satan, a victory over the grave itself. Our victory was not one in the resurrection. It was won at the cross. The cross was not a defeat; it was Christ's victory. And the resurrection is the proof that God accepted His work, His high priestly work, God vindicated Him in the resurrection, and it is the proof that not only He is the Christ,

the Son of God who died in the place of sinners, but that He is coming back, and He's coming back as a judge.

That's what Paul told the men of Athens in Acts chapter 17. God has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. It is the historic proof that He is the Son of God, and that He is the judge of mankind. And so, He will come again. As you said, He will come in the clouds, He will come in power, He will come in glory. And then, there will be no doubt as to who He is, and there'll be no witnesses and testimonies raised against Him. It will be plain to all, and every knee will bow to Him in that day.

That will be the second-greatest trial of all human history. The great and terrible day of the Lord, when all mankind will be brought to the bar of divine justice. It will be a terrible day, terrible day of pure justice. And yet, there is a way to escape that date in court. It is to believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior whose death is sufficient to cleanse all who believe in Him, and cleanse Him of the very worst of sins, sins as serious as those that were committed by these men of the Sanhedrin.

In fact, there's some evidence that the very men who judge Christ, some of these men at least, had ultimately come to faith in Him. The record of this account is too precise to be based on mere hearsay. It must be based on the testimony of men who were there. And we know from the Book of Acts that many of the priests came to faith. And so, perhaps as He silently accepted the abuse that these men gave Him, some of those priests saw Isaiah 53 in Him. Perhaps their eyes were open to the meaning of Psalm 110 or Daniel chapter 7. We don't know. We don't know how this affected them, but we do know this: that all who believe in Jesus Christ will be saved, regardless of their sin.

As Charles Wesley wrote, "The blood of Christ can make the foulest clean, His blood avail for me, avail for everyone who puts their faith in Him." And so, if you're here this morning and you have not trusted in Christ as your Lord and Savior, believe in Him. Don't dismiss Him as some great misunderstood human teacher. He has not left that open to us. We are faced with a verdict when we come to the text of Scripture, when we hear of Christ and we must render a verdict one way or another. Either He is the one whom He said He was, He is the Son of God, He is the Savior of the world, or He's a blasphemer. The verdict of God, the verdict of the Bible is clear:

He is the eternal son of God. He is the Savior of men, the Savior of all who believe in Him. And so if you've never believed in Christ, I urge you: trust in Him, receive the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting, which is the escape from the day of the Lord and the judgment to come. May God help you to do that. Shall we stand now for the benediction?

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we come to a text like this and we are reminded of a number of things. We are reminded of the wickedness of man and we must see ourselves in this. We look at these men of the Sanhedrin and we really, in a sense, looking at a mirror and seeing ourselves apart from Your grace, and it reminds us of the great grace that we have received. And we're reminded of the greatness of our Lord who did stand in majestic silence. And yet, in so doing, demonstrated Himself to be the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. The Savior of sinners, Savior of all who put their faith in Him. And so, we pray Lord if there be any in attendance this morning who don't know Christ as savior, may they see their lost condition, may they see their need of a Savior and find Him in Christ. We pray these things in our Savior's name, asking You to bless us now as we leave. Cause us to live lives that are pleasing to You this day and throughout the week. Amen.