

Episode #936 Matthew 26 Part 9-Christ Before the Sanhedrin

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord had just been arrested, and had refused to resist in any way. The disciples fled when they saw this, and yet Peter followed at a great distance and came into the high priest’s courtyard to see what would happen. Now, today we consider His trial before the Sanhedrin.

III. Trial Before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. Matthew 26:57-68.

- A. Verse 59. “All the council” in Greek is “the whole Sanhedrin.” Yet we know this is putting the greater part for the whole, for we know that Joseph of Arimathea at least had not consented to what they did, Luke 23:51. Probably any who were not corrupt in this were simply not invited to this illegal, nighttime meeting, which was against all custom and legal procedure. Even today we have what is called a quorum, and that is enough to count for the whole body. That is what they had here, though a few men of conscience were excluded from it. Note that they wanted false witnesses, knowing they could not get true. These were powerful men in a position to do great favors for others, and so they were confident that they could find some willing to bear false witness in order to gain their favor. Remember what the Lord taught in Matthew 15:19: things like false witness proceed from the heart and defile a man. These men were defiled in the extreme, however closely they kept the clean and unclean laws.
- B. Verse 60. “Found none” is repeated twice for emphasis. Though they sought, and though many were motivated to try to answer the call, yet they failed. The Lord’s character and life had been impeccable. They could not find a false witness, no matter how hard they tried. Finally, two come close enough that they bend the rules to accept their testimony. Notice that this was the major problem: the law required two witnesses’ testimonies to agree, and none of these false witnesses could agree in their lies. Yet two come close enough for these corrupt men to accept their false testimony.
- C. Verse 61. This was a misrepresentation of what the Lord said in John 2:19. He said if THEY destroyed “this” temple, He would raise it up in three days. By “this temple,” He meant His body, John 2:21. They misquoted and misrepresented what He said. These witnesses were as false as the others. He never said this, but “Destroy this temple.” He used a different word for “destroy” besides. He said “raise it up,” referring to resurrection, and not building. This testimony is altogether false, though a garbling of something He did say.
- D. Verse 62. Their trumped up, silly charges deserved no answer. Mark 14:59 shows us that the testimony of these witnesses ought to have been disallowed, since they discredited themselves by their own words. Therefore, the high priest should have been able to answer his own question: these are lies that these witness against You. But his wicked heart had no desire for the truth.
- E. Verse 63. This was entirely contrary to procedure, for He had already been asked to speak before being put on oath. No proper procedures are being followed here. This is a show trial, and there was nothing legal about it. The whole thing from beginning to end was a travesty of justice. He brings God’s name into it.
- F. Verse 64. There was no way that He could have given a stronger, more affirmative answer than this. “Nevertheless” means moreover or besides. “See” means you shall

discern this. How, we might ask, will this wicked man be there to see this? He will be raised to be judged as the rebel that he was. All of Israel will be raised at the start of the kingdom, but the wicked and rebellious servants like this man will be cut out, Ezekiel 20:33-38. This will include resurrected Israelites, Ezekiel 37:13-14. We believe, with Paul, in a resurrection of the just and the unjust, Acts 24:15. This wicked priest will be raised to answer in a just trial for his iniquity. He will receive actual justice, which he denied the Lord. “The right hand” or the rights, *dexion*. Of the Power is *dunamis*, inherent power. By the Power He means on the inherent power of God. He will be sitting as the rightful Master of this Power.

- G. Verse 65. Tearing the clothes was a sign of extreme agitation, often done in great grief or great indignation. Here, obviously indignation is meant. Knowing that all their witnesses up to now have failed utterly to bring forward any real charge, the high priest is no doubt relieved to be able to set aside the necessity for witnesses. They can all now claim to have witnessed His blasphemy. They are all now witnesses. Of course, he had utterly failed to prove that the Lord was not the Christ, nor answer the clear testimony of the prophesied miracles that He did that attested to that fact. He acts like he has proven what he has only alleged. This is still a tactic of scoundrels, liars, and false accusers even today, acting like the case is closed before it has even been made.
- H. Verse 66. They say He is liable to or worthy of death. It was translated “in danger of” when the Lord used it in Matthew 5:21-22.
- I. Verse 67. These are the civilized actions of this dignified body of the leaders of Israel! In their hatred they are reduced to the most ignoble brutes. The Romans did the same thing to Him in Matthew 27:30. These thought themselves far superior to the Romans, but they showed themselves of the same ilk as the most brutal of their soldiers. “Beat Him” means they struck Him with their fists. The palms of the hands means what we would call “slapped Him,” probably as hard as they could. This is the same word as He used when He told His disciples to “turn the other cheek” when men did this to them.
- J. Verse 68. Luke 22:64 says this was done when He was blindfolded. Of course, this makes beating worse, for one cannot brace oneself when one cannot see the blows coming. The mockery is plain when they call Him “Christ.” They had failed to prove He is not, but they treat Him like His claims are contemptible. It is their rejection of His rightful claims that is in fact contemptible. Yet He will give these men their own day in court, and they will be judged fairly, unlike what they did to Him.

IV. Conclusion: The trial of the Lord before the Sanhedrin was illegal on multiple fronts: it was held at night, the witnesses were allowed in spite of clear perjury, the Lord was not put under oath until after He had been questioned, and the conclusion was only alleged, not proved. This was a show trial, and a miscarriage of justice in the extreme. Yet this was all part of God’s plan, for it was His will that the Lord Jesus should die on behalf of the sins of others. Indeed, He did die, even for my sins and yours!