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Sentencing The Innocent One; Matt 26:57-68  
GPBC  
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Introduction – As we stated last week, the snapshot scenes of ch26 move at a rapid pace. Previously we were in Gethsemane, now we are in the court of the high Priest. Jesus is surrounded by priests, scribes, and elders. The disciples have already left Him. It's just Him now surrounded by the enemy. Peter keeping a watch from a distance. From garden to courtroom. From disciples to accusers. From prayer to the Father to condemnation by the council. The scene and the scenery have changed dramatically.

There is only one true innocent man who has ever lived. The Lord Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve sinned, and all who come from them and after them inherited their fallen nature, and therefore we are all born sinners and soon flex our fallen muscles against the will of God. There is not a single human being who has ever existed that is truly innocent, except for the Son of God who was born the Son of Man. He never departed from the Father's will in word, action, thought, or intention. He lived an absolutely perfect life, fulfilled the law's requirements, and was in every way morally excellent and pure – without any stain of sin or mark of corruption. The blameless, spotless Lamb of God.

So the task before the council of Pharisees and Sadducees is not an easy one. How do you condemn an innocent man? He's not only innocent of a specific crime, He's innocent of every crime. He's sinless. How do you fabricate a situation where He's not only condemned in your court but in the court of public opinion as well? How do you convince the secular authorities who hold the power of execution to execute a just and innocent man?

When we find Jesus standing before Caiaphas and the Council, that is the task before them. Condemning to death the only one who ever lived who did not deserve it.

- I. Present the Untrue as Truth
  - a. You have to begin with a lie. It's nothing new. That was Satan's tactic in the Garden of Eden and he's working the same scheme behind the

scenes in this courtroom. You have to tell a lie and then convince others that what is untrue is actually true.

- b. It takes a bit of work to present the untrue as true. I mean you have to work hard at it. First, you have to give the appearance of having the moral high ground, you have to suggest moral superiority – so Jesus is brought before the High Priest. Then you have to make the appearance of moral authority and power, you have to show in some way that you have the right to make this moral claim that is not to be questioned – so Jesus is brought into the courtroom of the Council surrounded by the religious elite, all clothed in their religious garments, all exuding the air of keepers of the law.
- c. But at some point, you have to do what you've gathered to do – you have to tell a lie. And so many false witnesses were brought forth to tell of some deed or word from Jesus that transgressed the law. But it's not just any transgression. It has to be a transgression that is worthy of death. So try as they might, nothing would really stick. None of the false testimonies reached the level of punishment by execution.
- d. So what do they do? They keep trying. They keep bringing forth false witnesses. Matthew says, "At last", meaning this took a while. But finally two came forward with a claim so preposterous one would either have to be insane to make it or believe that He was God and therefore able to do it. Finally, at last, they found something to fit their scheme.
- e. The two witnesses claimed to hear Jesus say, "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days."
  - i. So here is another step in presenting the untrue as true. You have to claim moral superiority. You have to appear as having moral authority and power. And you have to mix in a little truth to make the untruth believable. This is actually not what Jesus said or what he meant. In essence, they had to lie about their lie.
  - ii. John 2:18-22 – you see they didn't get it when Jesus first spoke it and they don't get it now in the twisted version.
- f. So what's the big deal here? Why did this accusation stick when the others failed? Because if Jesus claims to do in 3 days what took

hundreds of men 46 years to do, then He is claiming supernatural power. He is claiming to do what only God can do. V62

- g. But v63 says Jesus remained silent. He didn't try to clear His name or vindicate Himself, explain Himself, or point out they had misquoted Him. He didn't answer a word. You see, He didn't need to. His whole life had given testimony to who He truly was. Furthermore, the Scripture had prophesied silence would be His response in the face of false accusation.
    - i. Isaiah 53:7 –
    - ii. You see the Father knew He was innocent, and that's all that matters in the end.
  - h. BTW – He could have performed this feat even though it was a mischaracterization of His words. He could have raised the temple building in 3 days just like He could have turned the stones into bread in the wilderness – but He didn't because it wasn't the father's will and He was perfectly obedient to the Father!
- II. Present the Truth as Untrue (vv63-65)
- a. The high priest is outraged that Jesus won't speak. He's got to get Him to say something so he can condemn Him with His own words. So He makes the highest plea he can make, "I adjure you by the living God, (remember that's who he's talking to already) tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Remember this was Peter's confession of faith in Matthew 16. You have to believe this in order to be saved. So the high priest takes the only true saving confession and uses it as a trap to condemn the only true Savior.
  - b. Jesus now speaks because the high priest has called on God – and He speaks the truth. V64.
    - i. You have said so – you have just spoken for yourself the greatest truth of all time. Take that "if" and you will be made new!
    - ii. You will see Me again, but I won't be hanging on a cross, I'll be seated on a throne – a throne much higher than yours.
    - iii. And I won't be coming to save – I'll be coming to judge.
    - iv. Every single word Jesus has just spoken was absolutely true. That is exactly what will take place when Christ returns.

- c. But if you're going to condemn the only innocent one who has ever lived, you have to take the truth and present it as untrue. You have to take beauty and love of the truth and give it a label that makes it appear as an ugly, hate-filled lie. In this religious context of moral superiority and authority, the word blasphemous will do just fine.
  - d. Here is a room filled with people who were to be the keepers of holy Scripture awaiting the arrival of the Messiah, who were convinced they were doing the Lord's work, they were on the right side of history, and the best they could do was condemn the innocent one. Just like the best Adam could do was take a bite of forbidden fruit. Our best falls short of the glory of God every time.
- III. Present the Innocent as Guilty
- a. Finally, the last step in condemning the innocent one is to present the innocent as guilty. And not just guilty but deserving of death.
  - b. Now that they've justified their evil intention, they release their fury. And they spit upon the Savior's face in a show of ultimate disrespect. They strike and slap the face that held the gaze of grace and the words of life to demean Him. And they mock the giver of all good things to humiliate Him. Why wouldn't they – He deserves their outburst – they've pronounced Him guilty.
  - c. Now look closely with me at vv67-68 and then let's take a close look at our lives. Every time we rejected God's will, every time we went our own way in defiance of our Creator, every time we claimed the moral high ground rather than humbly and gratefully bowing to the Lord of all, we spit in His face and struck His cheek and mocked His glory – while all the while it was Him who was giving us the life and breath to do it.

Conclusion – what's going on here pastor? There is nothing right about this trial. It's unfair. It's unjust. It's untrue. Why is this happening?

You see it's the gospel. The Innocent One is declared guilty so that the guilty ones may be declared innocent. Oh if you never loved Jesus, you should love Him now. He took our place so that if we would embrace and follow Him, He might take us to His place!