



STORY

6/26/06

Jesus Before the High Priest and Peter's Denial— Matthew 26:57-75; 27:3-10; Mark 14:53-72; Luke 22:54-71; John 18:12-27

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, as I read once again how You suffered great humiliation to pay for my sins, my heart is filled with gratitude. As I read once again how Your disciples all abandoned and denied You, I am filled with awe that still You remained faithful. As I contemplate all that You suffered for my sins, it is my desire now to thank You with my life. It is therefore my prayer that I might continue to experience Your hand in my life, as I struggle to teach Your little lambs the truth concerning Your suffering and death. Work powerfully in their hearts through Your Word, and make me an able witness. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Sanhedrin — The Jewish Supreme Court, made up of 70 men of pure Jewish descent plus the High Priest. The Sanhedrin tried cases that did not fall under Roman jurisdiction, such as heresy and idolatry. They had their own police force and could both make arrests and pronounce the death sentence, but they had no authority to carry out such a sentence.

Adjure — to place someone under oath. This was the Jewish equivalent to swearing in.

Blasphemy — speaking evil of God, or claiming for oneself anything that belongs to God, especially His power, praise, or glory. For the Jews this was a crime punishable by death.

OUTER AIM

Jesus was tried and abused by the Jews and denied by Peter.

INNER AIM

Though forsaken and abused by all mankind, Jesus chose to lay down His life for us all.

BACKGROUND

(Rupprecht Bible History References Vol.)

It was Thursday night (early Friday to the Jews) about 3 a.m. when Jesus was arrested. It was a mixed crowd of both Romans and Jews that took captive the Son of God. Jesus was taken first to Annas, the former high priest, who was the father-in-law of the high priest that year, Caiaphas. Annas was the real power behind the office. Ironically, the Jews broke several of their own laws in their attempt to convict Jesus of criminal activity. Preliminary examination of the accused was forbidden by Jewish law — which is exactly what took place when they took Jesus to Annas. Nor were the Jews permitted to convene the Sanhedrin before the morning sacrifice (which they did anyway) or on the day of, or prior to, any major festival. The Jews were therefore breaking several of their own laws in their irrational attempt to convict and condemn the sinless Son of God.

v. 57-58

- ▶ Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not mention the illegal preliminary examination of Jesus before Annas. Why the arresting party would take Jesus to Annas first is uncertain. It could be an indication that Annas still represented the real power of the office of high priest.
- ▶ (Note that the officer who slapped Jesus in John 18:22 even referred to Annas as if he were still the high priest.)

- ▶ Or it could have been that they took Jesus there simply because Annas' residence was closest to Gethsemane, where Jesus was arrested.
- ▶ Jesus was then taken to Caiaphas, where the scribes and elders had gathered. - Peter did not immediately abandon Jesus. In fear, however, he distanced himself from his Lord.

v. 59-63

- ▶ This was the epitome of an unfair trial.
- ▶ Those entrusted with justice in Israel were in no way concerned with the truth.
- ▶ They did not weigh the evidence to establish a just verdict.
- ▶ They first established a false verdict and then brought false evidence to support it.
- ▶ It is no wonder therefore that their false witnesses could not agree.
- ▶ Note that Jesus never said anything about destroying the temple in Jerusalem. The temple He was going to rebuild after three days was His own body.
- ▶ How frustrating to the high priest that Jesus would not answer these false charges.
- ▶ The evidence was not there to convict Jesus.
- ▶ The high priest no doubt hoped that Jesus might say something in their presence that they could then use to convict Him. Caiaphas therefore placed Jesus under oath in an attempt to elicit a statement.

v. 64-66

- ▶ Jesus accepted the fact that Caiaphas has placed Him under oath and spoke the truth, proclaiming Himself to be the Christ, the Son of God.
- ▶ The high priest tore his clothes to dramatize his "horror" at what he called "blasphemy" on the part of Jesus.
- ▶ Note that this too was an illegal act on the part of the high priest, who was strictly forbidden from doing so (cf. Leviticus 21:10).

v. 67-68

- ▶ Spitting in someone's face was considered the worst insult possible by the Jews.
- ▶ Once the death sentence was pronounced, Jesus became fair game for any and all abuse and ridicule, though this treatment also preceded His sentence.
- ▶ What hatred they displayed toward the sinless Son of God, their own Savior!

v. 69-75

- ▶ John, who was known to the high priest, arranged for Peter to be admitted into the courtyard of the high priest. (John 18:15-16)
- ▶ Nothing is known of John's words and actions while Peter was denying his Lord.
- ▶ Note the progression of Peter's denial. He began with a simple denial. The second time he denied with an oath. Finally he added cursing and swearing to make himself believable.
- ▶ Peter's Galilean accent gave him away, no doubt as conspicuous in Jerusalem as a southern accent in the northern United States or a northern accent in the South.
- ▶ While Mark records that Jesus said, "Before the rooster crows twice you will deny me three times," the other three gospels record only one crowing of the rooster.
- ▶ Jesus no doubt said both things in the course of His conversation with Peter. Mark, who was probably guided by Peter in the writing of his Gospel, records finer detail.
- ▶ Matthew, Luke, and John record only "the crowing of the rooster" as Jesus' reference to sunrise.
- ▶ Thus Jesus very likely first said to Peter, "Before the rooster crows (i.e., before the sun rises) you will deny me three times."
- ▶ We could imagine Peter's objection. Mark then records Jesus' further statement, "Before the rooster crows twice you will deny me three times." Both statements are true. Matthew, Luke, and John refer to sunrise, Mark to the actual sound of a rooster crowing.
- ▶ Luke records for us that the Lord turned and looked at Peter after the third denial.
- ▶ What a dagger to the heart of proud Peter!
- ▶ He went out and wept bitterly, knowing, unlike Judas, that he could do nothing to pay for his sin.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, thank You for suffering so much to pay for my sins. Give me a strong, humble faith that I might never deny You as my Lord and Savior. Help me to remember how important it is for me to boldly tell others that I believe that You are the only Savior of the world. When I do fall into sin, help me to repent of my sin as Peter did. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Since there are important parts of this lesson scattered throughout the four gospels, the teacher should use the harmony that has been prepared or tell the story in his/her own words — taking note of the various points found in the four different accounts.

APPLICATIONS

1. Jesus, in answering the "I adjure thee" of the high priest, took an oath. We can learn from this that taking an oath is not a sin. It is swearing falsely or frivolously that is a sin. We may in good conscience take an oath when necessary for the glory of our God or the good of our neighbor. In our everyday conversation however, our yes should be yes, and our no, no. (See Matthew 5:37 below.)
2. Telling the truth was so important to God that He dedicated a commandment to it. God hates a false witness in part because it was false witnesses who condemned His own Son.
3. The Jewish leaders were willing to sin to accomplish their goals. Jesus said in Matthew 7:20, "By their fruits you will know them." Those who will sin to get what they want are not working to please their Lord, who desires obedience from His children. List some ways we might be tempted to sin to get what we want.
4. We are the ones who should have been put on trial, not Jesus. We have sin, he had none. We deserve to be punished, Jesus did not. Yet Jesus was guilty! Not according to the justice of man, but according to God's justice. God made Jesus to be sin for us. Because of this, Jesus was made the worst sinner the world has ever seen. How the Father must have loved us to condemn His own Son in this way!

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Exodus 20:16 - You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Proverbs 16:18 - Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Isaiah 53:6 - The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Middle any of the above and...

Matthew 5:37 - But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

2 Corinthians 5:21 - For (God) made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Proverbs 19:5 - A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who speaks lies will not escape.

Upper any of the above and...

Isaiah 53:7 - 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.

Romans 3:23-24 - For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 26:64 - Jesus said to him, ".....I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

HYMN CHOICES

"O Dearest Jesus, What Law Hast Thou Broken?" (TLH #143:1-3)

"Christ, the Life of All the Living" (TLH #151:1,2 & 5)

"Go to Dark Gethsemane" (TLH #159:1-2)