

BIBLE STORY: JESUS FACES THE HIGH PRIEST AND THE SANHEDRIN

Matthew 26:57-75

Central Thoughts

- The chief priests and the council of the Jews sought false testimony against Jesus so that they might charge Him with blasphemy and deliver Him to the Roman governor to be crucified.
- The High Priest presided over the Sanhedrin that found Jesus guilty of blasphemy because they rejected the testimony from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Son of God.
- Jesus was rejected and sentenced to death for confessing the truth.
- Jesus willingly went to the cross for our salvation, like a Lamb that was led to the slaughter.
- God used the wicked actions of the chief priests and Sanhedrin to accomplish His greatest good in the death of His innocent Son for the salvation of the world.
- Peter denied his Lord because he was afraid to suffer and die and because he had no strength of his own to remain faithful.

Discussion Questions

Where did the soldiers of the Temple guard lead Jesus after His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane?

They led Him to Caiaphas, the High Priest, who presided over the Sanhedrin (the ruling council of the Jews).

Why did Peter follow Jesus into the courtyard of the High Priest?

He came into the courtyard “to see the end”— to see Jesus’ trial that would end in His death.

What does Matthew testify to when he says that the chief priests and members of the Sanhedrin “sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death”?

Matthew’s testimony makes it clear that there was no evidence against Jesus for which He should be put to death. In other words, all testimony against Jesus that would accuse Him of blasphemy would be false because He IS the Son of God. (He is who His words and works testify Him to be according to the Old Testament Scriptures).

What did the last two false witnesses testify to?

That Jesus said, “I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.”

Why was their testimony false witness?

They rejected Jesus’ death and resurrection. Jesus actually said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” (John 2:19-22) but He was speaking of the temple of His body that would be crucified at the hands of sinners and on the third day rise to life again. He was not speaking about the temple made of stone and wood.

Why did Jesus remain silent and refuse to defend Himself?

He was the Lamb of God, prophesied in Isaiah 53:7, “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.”

Why did Jesus confess to being the Son of God and the Son of Man when He was commanded under oath, in the name of the living God, to answer the High Priest’s question?

He testified to the truth for the honor of God the Father and as a testimony against the false witnesses who testified against Him. Jesus IS the Son of God and the Son of Man who would be delivered up to death for who He actually was.

What Old Testament prophecy was Jesus referring to when He confessed that they would see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven?

Daniel 7:13-14 “Behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days...then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom...His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.”

Why did the Sanhedrin immediately call for Jesus to be put to death?

Jesus clearly confessed to being the Son of God and since they considered this to be a lie, He was sentenced to death for the sin of blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16).

Why did members of the Sanhedrin spit at Him, taunt Him, and mock Him?

They rejected Him and did not believe that He was the Son of God and the Lord's anointed Messiah.

Against the backdrop of the false witnesses who testified against Jesus and the truth of Jesus' testimony, what did Peter do?

He bore false witness, taking the Lord's name in vain (breaking the Second and the Eighth Commandments). He denied his Lord three times, calling down curses and swearing falsely that He did not know Jesus.

Why did Peter deny his Lord?

He was afraid to suffer and die the horrible death he saw happening to Jesus.

What did Peter remember when the rooster crowed?

He remembered the word of Jesus that predicted His denial, and he went out of the courtyard weeping bitterly.

What is the meaning of Peter's bitter weeping?

He was overcome with guilt and was sorry for what he had done.

Meditation on the Bible Story

Jesus testified to the truth. He always faithfully preached and taught the Word of God. He never lied and He never failed to uphold the honor of His Father. He is the Son of God and the Son of Man, true God and true Man, who would redeem us with His holy precious blood, and with His innocent suffering and death, that we might be His own. He did not open His mouth to defend Himself against false accusations, but like a silent Lamb He would go to the slaughter without objection, willingly laying down His life in love for us so that we might live. They would destroy the Temple of God in His crucifixion, but on the third day He would be raised to life again. The High Priest, the chief priests, and the elders of the people on the Sanhedrin rejected Jesus and, in the end, falsely accused Jesus of blasphemy, sentencing Him to death for being who He actually was - the Son of God. God used the wicked schemes, lies, and deceit of those who hated Jesus and who rejected God's Word to bring about God's greatest good for the redemption of sinners through the death of His Son. Peter was afraid to suffer and die with his Lord. Like us, Peter had no strength of his own to remain faithful. He was brought to godly sorrow and contrition for his sin when he remembered Jesus word, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times" and he ran out of the courtyard of the High Priest weeping bitterly. Like Peter, the Lord's Word calls us to contrition and repentance that we might deny ourselves, confess our sins, receive His forgiveness, and in the strength of our Lord's forgiveness take up our cross and follow Him who went to the cross for us.

Prayer on the Bible Story

Lord God, heavenly Father, since Jesus confessed the truth before the High Priest and did not deny that He was the Son of God, make us truly sorry for our sins and by Your Word of grace strengthen us so that we may never deny our Lord, but boldly confess Him, even if we are facing suffering and death for being His disciples; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



Jesus Faces the Sanhedrin
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