

## Jesus Was Tried by Caiaphas

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that God carried out His plan, even though the only goal of the religious leaders was to destroy Jesus. In this topic, we will see what the religious leaders did to have their excuse to destroy Jesus.

We see what happened after the men had arrested Jesus and the disciples had fled. Matthew 26:57-60 says, “And those who had laid hold of Jesus led *Him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest’s courtyard. And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end. Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward”. The men who had come to arrest Jesus took hold of Him and led Him away to the home of Caiaphas, the high priest. We see that in addition to Caiaphas, the scribes and elders were also gathered at the home of the high priest. They had gathered to condemn Jesus to death.

We also see what happened after the disciples forsook Jesus and fled. Peter followed Jesus at a distance to see where the multitude was going to take Him. Then, Peter saw that Jesus was taken into the courtyard of the high priest. Peter went into the courtyard of the high priest and sat down with the servants to see what the final result was going to be for Jesus.

In John 11:47-50, we read, “Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, ‘What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.’ And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.’” The council was a group of seventy men, plus the high priest, that was known as the Sanhedrin in the time of Jesus. Numbers 11:16-17 says, “So the LORD said to Moses: ‘Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that *is* upon you and will put *the same* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear *it* yourself alone.’” This group of seventy men was considered the ruling body of the Jews. They had already determined that Jesus should be put to death.

However, these men wanted to make it look like their plan to murder Jesus was legal. As a result, they looked for many false witnesses who would give false witness about Jesus and provide them with an excuse to put Jesus to death. Mark 14:56 says, “For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree.” Here, we see that even though they looked for false witnesses, they could not find any who agreed in their false testimony about Jesus. Finally, we see that two false witnesses, who could both agree about something they had heard Jesus say, came forward.

Matthew 26:61-63 writes, “And said, ‘This *fellow* said, “I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.” And the high priest arose and said to Him, “Do You answer nothing? What *is it* these men testify against You?” But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!”” Mark 14:57-59 gives greater detail about what the two witnesses said when those verses say, “Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, ‘We heard Him say, “I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.”’ But not even then did their testimony agree.”

We see that the many false witnesses could not agree because of the fact that their witness about Jesus was just the thoughts in their own minds, not something they had heard Jesus say or had seen Jesus do. Both times the Ten Commandments were given in the Old Testament, they make exactly the same statement. Exodus 20:16 and Deuteronomy 5:20 both say, “‘You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.’” These false witnesses were willing to break one of the Ten Commandments in order to have an excuse to put Jesus to death. However, they could not reach agreement about their false testimony.

The final two witnesses gave a similar testimony about something Jesus had said, but even their testimony did not fully agree. One said, “I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.” Mark gives the testimony of the other which says, “I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.” John 2:19-21 tells exactly what Jesus said, “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ Then the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body.” In these verses, we see they had the words right, but they totally misunderstood the meaning. Jesus was actually talking about His death and resurrection. Jesus did not bother to answer their accusations because there was no crime even committed by Him saying those words.

The high priest then took control since he could not get any witnesses to even give a false reason why Jesus should be put to death. He asked Jesus if Jesus had no answer to give about the charges which were made against Him. Jesus just kept silent. Suddenly, the high priest had a new idea and said, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!” Here, we see that the high priest thought he could get Jesus to talk by placing Him under oath. Numbers 30:2 says, “‘If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.’” This verse talks about a vow to the Lord, so the high priest said that he put Jesus under oath by the living God. Here, we see that the high priest was trying to cover up his own sin of saying it was expedient that Jesus should die so that the religious leaders would not lose their power. The high priest said, “Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God.”

Matthew 26:64-66 says, “Jesus said to him, ‘*It is as* you said. Nevertheless, 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.’ Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, ‘He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?’

They answered and said, ‘He is deserving of death.’” Jesus agreed that He was the Christ, the Son of God. Then, He combined the thoughts of two Old Testament verses to show that He truly is the Son of God. Psalm 110:1 says, “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” Jesus had used this very verse, just a few days earlier, to silence the Pharisees, so they were afraid to ask Jesus any more questions. Matthew 22:43-45 says, “He said to them, ‘How then does David in the Spirit call Him “*Lord*,” saying: “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool’”? If David then calls Him “*Lord*,” how is He his Son?”” By using this verse again, with many of the same men there, Jesus made it clear that David recognized Him as Lord.

The second Old Testament passage Jesus included was from Daniel 7:13, where we read, “‘I was watching in the night visions, and behold, *One* like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.’” Jesus used the phrase “Son of Man” several times, in the book of Matthew, to make it clear that He was and is the Messiah. The Jews knew that the Ancient of Days is the Father who would crown the Christ as the Eternal King. Daniel 7:14 goes on to say, “‘Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom *the one* which shall not be destroyed.’” Jesus made it clear, in His answer to the high priest, that He is the One who will rule forever.

We see that the high priest immediately tore his clothes. Leviticus 21:10 says, “‘“*He who is* the high priest among his brethren, on whose head the anointing oil was poured and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes.’”” In this verse, we see that the high priest was specifically forbidden to tear his clothes. Later, the Jews had chosen to violate this verse when they wrote, in the Talmud, that a high priest who witnessed a blasphemy was allowed to tear his clothes. In making this statement, the Jews showed that they valued their traditions and made them of more importance than the Word of God. As a result, the high priest was the one who actually committed blasphemy that night. After tearing his clothes, the high priest said, “He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?” The high priest and the rulers had their excuse to put Jesus to death and so the rulers answered, “He is deserving of death.”

We saw in the first part of this topic that Caiaphas and the rulers had decided several weeks earlier that Jesus should die, so they would not lose their power and control. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why the religious leaders chose to put Jesus to death, instead of recognizing Jesus as the Messiah who will rule for all eternity. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.