

Luke 22:63-71

63 Now the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him.

64 And having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, "Prophecy! Who is the one who struck You?"

65 And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him.

66 As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying,

67 "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will by no means believe.

68 "And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go.

69 "Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God."

70 Then they all said, "Are You then the Son of God?" So He said to them, "You rightly say that I am."

71 And they said, "What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."

You all remember the famous scene of the trial in Alice in Wonderland, where the Queen of Hearts begins by saying to the prisoner Alice, "now are you ready for your sentence?" Alice protests "but there must be a verdict first!" and the Queen replies "Sentence first, verdict afterwards!" The injustice in the Wonderland trial doesn't shock you, because it's just an amusing tale for children. No one really fears that Alice really is going to lose her head.

But when you read about Christ's trials before the Sanhedrin and then Pilate, you can't help but be dismayed, because they are so patently unjust and because of what you know will be the result; ***Jesus the one and only person who has ever been totally innocent of any wrongdoing is going to be humiliated, beaten, cruelly tortured, and then put to death via one of the most excruciating methods anyone has ever been able to dream up.*** Jesus was sentenced before he ever arrived in the High Priest Courtyard, his enemies had long been seeking a method to destroy him, and now because the time had come for Him to drink the cup of the Father's Wrath on our behalf, he Had been delivered into their hands like a Lamb going to slaughter. There never was a possibility that the outcome could be different, but that doesn't lessen the awfulness of what happened.

Before we examine the events though I do want to make a brief note about Luke's account of Christ's trial. He doesn't get into too many details of what went on, I think that is partially because Luke rightly can't bear to spend too much time dwelling upon a scene that not even Angels could bear to look upon. Who after all could love Christ, and enjoy writing about these moments? The events are more terrible even than an Al Qaeda video. But also we have to keep in mind that Luke is trying to fit all of his account into one single Papyrus Scroll. He wants after all to produce an account of the Gospel that could be easily copied by hand and passed on from place to place. Apparently, the experts tell us that at this point he is already reaching the maximum manageable length for a papyrus scroll. So he has to condense. John is able to write more about these events precisely because he focuses on the last week of Christ's life and gives very little space to the rest of his ministry.

John 18 tells us for instance, that Christ has already been interviewed by Annas the Father in Law of the Official High Priest Caiaphas at this point. And incidently just so you know about why its always "Annas & Caiaphas." Annas was high priest first, but had been deposed by the Romans from that office in favor of Caiaphas. But the Law stated that a High Priest was High Priest for life so probably at Jewish insistence, Annas continued to function as the head of the Sanhedrin the Jewish governing body and also acted as kind of the shadow high priest.

Jesus had been struck during that interview, and now he is treated with utter contempt in the courtyard. Mocking him the temple police blindfold him and beat him and then ask him to “prove” he is the Messiah by telling them who hit him. Jesus didn’t answer then, ***“as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.”*** Someday though, he will answer those who struck him that night, and then it will be His mockers who will be unable to answer.

Jewish law stated that a trial could not be held during the cover of darkness, so when daylight came Jesus was taken before the full Sanhedrin for trial. Their objective in this, was to prove that He had claimed to be the Christ, Messiah, the Son of God. If they could do that then they could condemn Him both before the Sanhedrin and before the Roman court. You see, if Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, then they would be able to condemn Him for blasphemy because they did not believe He was, and if Jesus claimed to be the Christ, well everyone knew that the Messiah was the rightful king of the Jews and so they could also have him brought before the Romans as a rebel against the rule of Caesar and condemned for treason. And treason was a death penalty offense.

Now, most of the Jewish leaders in the Sanhedrin would have liked nothing better than to have executed Him themselves for Blasphemy, but the Romans forbade the people they ruled to exercise capital punishment directly. You see that way they couldn’t put to death Roman collaborators or worse Romans. So they would need the trumped-up treason charge in order to give Pilate an excuse for doing what they wanted.

So they ask Jesus, “If you are the Christ, tell us” – Jesus knows what they are asking. They want Him to condemn himself with his own words. They have not believed his miracles, his healings, his teaching day by day in the temple, they will by no means believe now. So He says to them, no matter what I say, you won’t believe me. And if I enter into the kind of exchange I’ve already had with your representatives were I ask them questions designed to show them from scripture that I’m the Christ – the so called Socratic method – you won’t answer because you’re afraid of the conclusions. And at this point you certainly aren’t going to let me go. I have been sentenced by you already. You are going to Kill me.” But he goes on to tell them – that after they do kill him, it will not be the end, he will sit on the right hand of the power of God. [George Lucas obviously rips off this idea in Star Wars when in the final fight he has Obi Wan tell Darth Vader ***“You can’t win, Darth. If you strike me down, I shall become more powerful than you could possibly imagine.”***]

Christ of course is not referring to Star Wars, he is referring to that glorious Messianic vision in ***Daniel 7:13-14 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.***

14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.

The Sanhedrin knows it, their ears almost prick up and they ask ***“Are You then the Son of God”*** and at that fateful moment, Christ sets His face to go to the cross. He even answers them with *ego eimi* – I AM. Which is what God called Himself before Moses “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘**I AM (*Ego Eimi*) has sent me to you.**’ ”

The Sanhedrin has exactly what they were looking for. Jesus cannot lie, He is the Christ, He is the Son of God, but they will never believe Him. So Christ’s true confession perversely becomes his death

warrant. ***God has kept His promise, He has come to dwell with his people, and they have sentenced Him to death for it.***

Which brings me to my first of two applications of these verses:

1) How many times have you heard non-Christians say something along the lines of “***Jesus never claimed He was the Messiah***”, or “***Jesus never said He was God!***”?

I hope when you hear that, you will say “Oh no, I am sorry but you’re wrong. He did say that *even when He knew it would cost Him His life.*” And then I hope you take them to this passage, or to Matt. 26:64, or Mark 14:62, or to anyone of the dozens of places where either Christ made this statement, or others made it in his presence and he praised them.

For instance, when Jesus asked Peter “***But who do you say that I am?***” and Peter said “***You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.***” Jesus didn’t reply, “***No, no, Peter I am just an enlightened teacher like Buddha, I hate organized religion and especially evangelicalism. In fact guys I don’t want you to tell anyone they should believe that about me.***” Instead Christ praised Peter and declared that his Good Confession was the result of his having it revealed to Him by His Father in heaven.

But you see beloved, that question that Jesus put to Peter, “Who do you say that I am” has always been the central question. There are and always have been only two sides in this courtroom: Those who agree with Caiaphas and Annas, or those who agree with Jesus.

And I know this will sound harsh to some ears but only those who believe and confess that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, have the right to call themselves “Christians”. The followers of the Messiah. If you don’t believe He was the Son of God, the Messiah, the Christ. Then you are manifestly *not* a Christian.

And if that sounded Harsh, well what does John, the Beloved Apostle of Christ say? 1 John 2:22 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. 23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

In fact, why were all these testimonies of His life, these Gospels written and then painstakingly copied, John the beloved apostle tells us: ***John 20:31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name***

And my final but related second point: There is a tendency to look at these terrible events and see the tragic figure in them as Jesus, and then to weep for Him. In fact there was recently a film made that took that followed that line very closely. But what did Jesus himself say as he was going up to be crucified, carrying the very cross to those who were weeping for Him there and then?

Luke 23:38 “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

The tragic figures are those who reject Christ, those very people who betrayed him in the garden, and struck him in the courtyard, and condemned him in the Sanhedrin, and who every day, deny Christ. Brothers and Sisters, if you are one of those people, just as I once was. And believe me brethren I

know first had what it is to mock Christ, to strike Him and to Spit on Him, then I beg you to weep for yourself and for your sins, and for the fact that each of us is responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. And to flee to Him. If you have, well then brothers and sisters, I sometimes wonder, we get angry at those who deny and mock Christ, but should we not rather weep for them? Pray for them? Exhort them with all our might to close with Christ. Oh, if we had any true conception of what an eternity in Hell really was, would we wish It on ANYONE? I think not. What did Christ say of these very same people who put Him to death?

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do"