

Matthew 23-02-12a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace & Truth Bible Church. This is the 12th day of February 2023 and we're continuing our study of the career of the Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 26. He has been arrested in the garden and taken for the first of three Jewish trials to the residence area of the high priest.

We'll be picking up this morning in verse 69, actually a little bit before that, the section of 57 through 75 is where we're generally located. We'll be moving back and forth because there are two or three different scenes here which are important for us to understand if we're going to make application. It's an interesting exercise to see what the application is as you watch Jesus undergo these very criminal and ill-motivated inquisitions.

Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study and we'll begin. Father, we thank you as always for the privilege we have of coming before your throne and expressing our hearts, confessing our sins, being thankful for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have this great privilege. And as we look at his words and his works on this most significant of all nights and the following day, we pray that your Holy Spirit will help us to see the application, the pertinence for our own lives and how we conduct ourselves with the ongoing pressure of the world, the seductive influences, the distractions, the attempts to instill fear instead of the courage that comes through our faith.

We pray that as a result you can use us to further your plan and prepare us for future service and function in the kingdoms that are to come. We pray this all in Jesus' name, Amen. To read ourselves into the context, and as always there is nothing more important than context.

Beginning in verse 57, 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 and all the councils sought false testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but found none.

Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. Some of these, if you look at your New King James text note, all of those notes are accurate. When it says, and you text, that is by far the preferred text for these.

It doesn't make a great deal of difference in the telling of this story. Some of it is repetitious. Some of it is imported from the other gospels.

It's not wrong. It just wasn't in Matthew's original text. And so there is not a mention of the elders in verse 59, and there is not a repetition of finding no agreeing testimony in

verse 60.

In 61, they accuse him when at last two witnesses come forward. This fellow said, I'm able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days. Just by way of review and application in Proverbs, looking at the crafty harlot, the very opening description is that she seeks to deflect, to distract, to seduce, and to have her way using what primary method? Flattering words.

It is words. It is an attack of words. In her case, it is to suspend thinking and get someone imagining a tryst of some sort that will be pleasurable and gratifying to the self with no view toward what is moral, what is ethical, what pleases God, the consequences that might occur afterward.

It is an attack using words. And you will notice here that having arrested Jesus and brought him to the high priest's facility, it's a bit unclear. This seems to be both a residence and an office, if you will, because they are there late at night.

And if you had to choose one, it would be the courts of the high priest suggest that there is that both a hearing space and some living space. But the war of words here is to dream up some sort of charge against Jesus. It doesn't have to be true.

You just have to find enough people to agree that it is true, to claim that it is true. And you see this principle all around us today. Nobody has to be reminded of the nature of cancel culture and people misconstruing words, reading meanings into harmless comments and trying to find a way to gain power and exert influence by making false charges, by blowing small words up into big issues, and so on.

This has been a common tactic. And you can see 2,000 years ago, they were doing pretty much the very same thing. And notice in verse 63, Jesus kept silent.

When we go to the Gospel of John, we find that this is a summary account in Matthew, because if you get more detail, it is actually Annas to whom Jesus first speaks. This is John 18, verses 12 through 14. The detachment of troops, the captain and officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him, and they led him away to Annas first.

For he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. So a high priest then asked Jesus about his disciples and his doctrine.

I'm reading from John here. This is 1820. Jesus answered him.

Notice there is not an accusation here. It is just a question, what are you doing? What kind of followers do you have? Jesus answered him in verse 20. I spoke openly to the world.

I always taught in synagogues and in the temple where the Jews always meet. And in secret, I have said nothing. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them.

They know what I said indeed. When he had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Do you answer the high priest like that? Notice the combination of violence and mock outrage that Jesus is being struck for having an attitude, which he doesn't have. He is simply telling the truth.

But sometimes telling the truth, people accuse you of having a motive, of having an attitude, of being disrespectful. They will find some issue and then attack you violently. And striking a bound prisoner is pretty telling in and of itself.

Jesus speaks. This officer strikes. Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil.

What have I said? And if I am speaking well, and I am, because I know for a fact that all I have told you is the facts, I've taught openly. I've been speaking for years. Ask anybody who heard me what I teach.

I'm not going to give a sermon on the mount here, standing bound before you, being falsely accused. Ask somebody who heard my teaching. I've been teaching openly in the streets for years, and in the synagogues, and at the temple.

If I speak well, why do you strike me? Well, of course, there is an answer to that question. It is a real problem in objectivity. From that point, you can pick up in all four gospels in John 18, 24.

Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest. And this is where Mark, and Matthew, and Luke pick up their accounts, leading Jesus away to the high priest in verse 57 of our account. And the scribes are assembled there, along with all of these other officials.

The problem being, this has to be an unofficial hearing, because it is night, it is dark, and they are not allowed to conduct Sanhedrin business in the dark at night, particularly if they are going to bring a death penalty charge. So this is an illicit hearing. This is the hearing before the hearing.

They want to figure out how they are going to approach it when daylight comes, and there are public witnesses. This is kind of a secret trial, and they are going to figure out, they don't want to embarrass themselves by having a string of witnesses who can't agree with the public looking on, because the public is going to say, wait a minute, you are trying to railroad this man. So they are getting their act together beforehand.

Principle of application. We will often find people colluding and trying to get their story

straight in secret before they bring things out in public. You see this at government levels, federal government, even state and local governments, anything from a school board having a hearing in secret.

Trials in the biblical model should be open to the public, not held in secret. You can say exceptions for classified information, but as soon as you start doing that, people can claim there is classified information involved and hide what they are doing from the public, and trouble ensues. This is what happens when people meet in secret and try out different scenarios until they find one they think will stick.

It is evil. Jesus said in an earlier day, those things which are whispered in secret are going to be shouted from the housetops, and the reason is that you do not hide light under a bushel. You put it on a lamp stand so that it illuminates everyone.

If you are operating in the light, people will be drawn to the light, they will see the light, they will appreciate the light, and they will not trip, stumble, be injured, and have those who love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil holding sway. It is significant that on purpose they have intentionally perpetrated this arrest at night. They are meeting ahead of an official formal trial at night to get their act together.

Now, why do you think they did this? How many times have these same people accosted Jesus in public and had their heads handed to them on a platter, speaking wise? They dare not ask him questions anymore. They fear that Jesus will embarrass them one more time because they are frauds, they are hypocrites, they are whitewashed tombstones, they are cups that have been outside and are filthy on the inside. These are those to whom the seven woes were addressed, and so they do not want to take a chance that with a few well-chosen words Jesus is going to expose their evil and their hypocrisy.

So they are doing this at night to get the jump on Jesus, and he is not playing their game. This is why he remains silent once he reaches Caiaphas. He has a brief interchange with Annas, and you see what happens.

When he speaks, he gets smacked for simply stating a fact. I have taught in the open. If you want to know what I teach and who follows me, ask anybody.

It is public record. I submit the public record to your attention. Tell me what is wrong in any of that.

When they try to adduce false witnesses, they cannot get anybody to agree because it is all being made up. It also tells you people were not listening very closely because there are some words that Jesus spoke that could have been adduced, but the people who are willing to come forward as false witnesses were not listening, and they cannot get their quote straight because they are making it up. Typical of the evil opposition that is launched against us, and things have to be done in a illegitimate way, in the dark, in the

night, by liars, hypocrites, and those who would strike a bound prisoner because they do not like what he says.

When you get here to Matthew's account, after the attempts to bring these charges, but no two witnesses can agree, in verse 62, the high priest arose and said to him, do you answer nothing? They are having no success having accusers, having two, three, or more witnesses agree that he blasphemed, that he said something awful about Torah, or about God, or about himself. Nobody can come up with anything. So Caiaphas changes tactic.

Let's get you to talk, and we'll try to hang you with your words right here before us. We've got a room full of witnesses. If we can get you to say something that we can misconstrue into an offense, a serious enough offense, that we can execute you.

So why aren't you talking? Say something. We're all here listening, and we'll find a way to make something you say now stick. So here's the observation that we can interpret and apply.

There is a time to speak, and there is a time to remain silent. Annas, the older, more experienced father-in-law of Caiaphas, asks Jesus about himself, about his teaching, and about his followers. Jesus gives a short answer.

He says, look, that information is public record. Ask anybody. And he gets smacked for it.

He comes to Caiaphas. Caiaphas has Jesus standing there bound while all of these people falsely accuse him, and he is surprised and annoyed that Jesus doesn't speak up and try to refute these false allegations. Jesus says nothing.

So now he's trying to prod him into talking and hanging himself in his words, and Jesus answers nothing. Notice the context. There is an obvious effort to trap him in his words.

That's why Caiaphas is poking him here. Why don't you answer? Are you guilty? Is that why you're not answering? But of course, if he were guilty, they would have been able to find enough witnesses to make that stick. So Jesus kept silent.

So the high priest answered. Notice the high priest answered. What is he answering? He's answering silence.

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. The answer here is important.

And in at least one case, it is mistranslated and it is misconstrued with your words in italics. This is extremely important to understand what Jesus said and what he did not say in response to this question. The high priest says, I put you under oath by the living God.

Now, he's talking to the living God. Does Caiaphas, the illegitimate, non-Levitical high priest, have authority to put anybody, much less Jesus himself, under oath before the living God? I put you under oath. Who standing in the room has authority to say or do anything related to the living God? This is so backward.

And the reason I pointed out is not just because it's a fact, but think about the mind of the Lord Jesus. Can you imagine the righteous indignation that this question, that this adjuring, this move by the fake high priest could have to someone who wasn't self-possessed and bearing all of the fruit of the Spirit, including self-control, gentleness, humility, self-control? If anybody had a right to blow up and incinerate everyone in the room, it would be the Lord Jesus, who is the Son of the living God. And some petty, tin-pot, dressed-up fake of a priest is putting the Lord of glory under oath to the living God.

It's heinous. This is one of the worst things they do to Jesus all night, honestly. I put you under oath by the living God.

It also implies that if Jesus were not under oath, He would lie. And the only way we're going to get the truth is to have you swear by the living God that what you say is true. And we're going to have you swear by witnesses, then we're going to impugn what you say and hang you for swearing by the living God and breaking one of the Ten Commandments, taking the name of the Lord God in vain.

This is a setup, and Jesus, of course, sees through it, but He doesn't lose His cool, to put it in the vernacular. He doesn't let the injustice, the indignation, the outright silliness and criminal evil of this action get the best of Him. And He's human.

He is walking around in flesh just like you and I have. Notice what Jesus says. For the first time in the court of Caiaphas, Jesus speaks.

In your New King James, you see in the red ink there, it is as you said. That is not what Jesus said. Scratch out the *it is as*, which is in italics, because that has been supplied by somebody attempting to convey the meaning.

You said *is all that's there*. When is the last time you saw that response? It was on this same night. Is it I, Lord? Is it I? All of the disciples are asking, and then Judas comes up and says, Lord, is it I? Jesus gave the identical response.

You said. What does it mean? Is He saying, you said it. You're correct.

No, He's not. I've told you that I appreciate some things about the Chosen series. I have mixed feelings in general, but there are things about it that I appreciate and the endeavor that is made to get across some scriptural truths.

And one of them is that people will ask Jesus a question and it would really run down rabbit trails, deflect from what is happening at the moment and what is important and

pertinent at the time. And so His answer will be, that is a question for another time. We don't always have to answer a question.

Look at the Lord Jesus here. What does this answer mean? And we're going to put just these two. There are other occasions, but just these two.

Judas says, Lord, is it I? Am I the one who is betraying you? Here, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus' reply in both cases is, you said. You have said.

It doesn't make a lot of sense as it stands. What does it connote? What is He really saying in the vernacular of our modern English? You're the one bringing it up. I haven't brought it up.

In Judas' case, Jesus said, there is one of you who will betray me. But Jesus did not say who. And several times Jesus has mentioned that you are clean, but not all of you during the foot washing episode earlier in the evening.

Peter says, well, Lord, if I need washing, wash me all over. And Jesus said, you don't need a bath. You are already clean.

You are clean, but not all of you. One of you will betray me. But Jesus did not identify who.

The disciples start pressing Jesus to be specific, and He doesn't answer any of the other 11 disciples. When Judas comes up in, I am sure, low tones off to the side from the rest of the disciples because He knows He is the betrayer, He wants to know if Jesus knows that He is the betrayer. Is Judas asking because He doesn't know if it's Him or not? That would just be silly, right? Why is He asking? He wants to know if Jesus knows.

Does He actually know? Jesus might have got an inkling. He might have had a sense. Somebody might have reported, hey, the priests are saying they've got an inside man.

There's a leak. There's a spy. There's a mole that's reporting information.

And so Judas wants to know if Jesus is aware that it is, in fact, Himself. Jesus doesn't even answer Judas directly. When Judas comes up and says, Lord, is it I? He says, you're the one bringing it up.

I have chosen not to identify the betrayer, and I have chosen not to let the betrayer know if I know his identity or not. You're the one bringing up the issue. I didn't bring it up.

I'm not saying. You're the one trying to get an answer. You're the one who has picked this issue for your own purposes, and you're trying to get an answer out of me for your own purposes.

What do you suppose would have happened if Jesus had answered Judas and said, yep, it's you, buddy. I know it. How do you think the night would have gone? Do you think Judas would have come up in the garden and greeted him with a kiss? Everything would have been different.

Jesus chooses not to reveal everything He knows. Principle of application. You don't have to tell everything you know, even if you are directly asked.

The question does not create a responsibility to answer. Principles and an effort to fulfill the will of God and be pleasing in His sight determines what we say and what we don't say. This is the example of the Lord Jesus.

You don't have to tell everything you know, and many times it is best not to tell. Jesus knows it's Judas, but when Judas comes up, Judas still doesn't know when he leaves if Jesus knows it's him or not. Jesus just says, you're the one bringing it up.

You're the one making an issue out of this. I have not made an issue out of it. I have not chosen to say who it is, and I'm not going to let you know if I know or not.

You're the one forcing the issue here, not me, and it's a non-answer. What it does is put the responsibility on the questioner. Why are you asking this question? What do you hope to achieve? If Judas realizes that Jesus does know, the question itself makes Judas a liar.

The very fact that he's asking, Lord, is it I, as though he doesn't know, when he very much does know, is another sign of his guilt, his prevarication, his false front, his hypocrisy, his posing as innocent when he is in fact enormously guilty. You're the one bringing it up. That's what this means.

So back to our passage. I put you under oath by the living God. Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.

If you go to the Gospel of Mark, the translation of the answer is worse, because in Mark, they translate it, I am. This is Mark 14, 62. You might just turn a few pages over.

Mark 14, verse 62, because if you've got a writing utensil, I would encourage you to fix this, because it's wrong. Mark 14, verse 62. In verse 61, we'll go back to 60.

The high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, Do you answer nothing? What is it these men testify against you? But Jesus kept silent and answered nothing. Notice the emphasis in 61. He kept silent.

He answered nothing. You can answer with a facial expression. You can answer with rolling your eyes and sighing.

You can answer in any number of ways. Jesus is stone-faced. He doesn't react.

He doesn't contort. He is immovable. He simply stands there in perfect repose.

He is silent, and he answers nothing. He's inscrutable. They can't tell what he's thinking.

They can imagine, if they put himself in their place, what they would be thinking, and they're surprised that he doesn't act as they would act in similar circumstances. We should be different than the world. With the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, we can have preternatural, supernatural peace, presence, self-control, knowledge that it is not a time to speak.

So here in Mark, verse 61 of chapter 14, he kept silent and answered nothing. Again, the high priest asked him, saying to him, Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Notice the wording is slightly different, because they are asking him repeatedly. They've got to get him to say something, or this trial is going to fall apart.

So then in verse 62, your Bible says, Jesus said, I am. No, he didn't. Cross it out.

He did not say it. This is a later addition to the text, and it isn't there. All Jesus says here is, they say, Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? He says, You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power and coming with the clouds of heaven.

Jesus often speaks of himself in the third person as the Son of Man. But if you make a declaration about the Son of Man, the only way you can apply it to Jesus is if you either believe he is the Son of Man, or you think that he has claimed to be the Son of Man directly. So often Jesus couches his teaching about his future coming, his activities, his present coming.

The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Why does he do that? If someone is going to take these words back to their lords and masters, the chief priests, the elders, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sanhedrin members, and a servant who goes out to listen to Jesus comes back, well, what did he say? What can we hang him with? Well, he said the Son of Man is going to come on the clouds of glory. Well, that's Old Testament truth, that the Son of Man is going to come.

The Christ, the Messiah, is going to come on the clouds of glory. That's fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. All he's doing is quoting scripture.

If people believe that he is claiming it for himself, Jesus didn't do that publicly. Only on very rare occasions can you find a case where Jesus self-identifies, as they like to say now, self-identifies as the Messiah. He talks about what the Messiah is going to do.

If you know he's the Messiah, you know it's about him. If you don't, it's very difficult to connect it to him and then charge him with blasphemy for claiming to be the Christ, although there's nothing in the Law of Moses that says claiming to be the Messiah is a capital offense. Are you taking the name of the Lord in vain? That's not what that's

about.

Many people had already claimed to be the Messiah and they weren't hailed before the Sanhedrin and executed. This is all about power. This is about losing control of the people and losing the respect of the people and having a movement beginning to form that threatens the hegemony, threatens the structure and the self-righteous hypocrisy.

They will use any means to defuse that threat. If you don't believe that, take a look at the political landscape in America say 2015 to 2020 and beyond. It's still talking about it over two years later.

You can't stomp that guy out of sight enough because he's a threat. He's a threat to the existing shadow government. He's a threat to what people have built and what they like and what keeps them on top.

People who go into politics and suddenly become multi-millionaires on the pay that you get from your public office? No. Where does that come from? I could give you the Greek, but it's beside the point here. Just trust me on this.

Read some articles about Mark 14, verse 62. The I am is not there. It was added later because somebody thought Jesus ought to admit it and this would be the basis of his conviction.

It's not so. You have to believe that he is talking about himself when he says, you will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of glory and he gets them to indict themselves. When the high priest tears his clothes and says, what further need do we have of witnesses? They are going to use these words, which are simply a rehashing of Old Testament prophecy, claim that Jesus is a blasphemer and kill him for it.

This is what happens in the darkness. This is what happens when men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. By the way, this is what happens even when you speak truth.

You are the walking, living embodiment of truth. You speak the truth written in the Old Testament scriptures and the forces of evil will seek to destroy you for it. Well, let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to continue and we're going to see the rest of the six trials that take place on this night and the following morning. Three with the Jews, three with the Romans. What is the significance of each? We've seen the first two, these two illegitimate trials with Annas 1 and Caiaphas 2. The third one will come in the morning.

We'll see it when we come back.