

Matthew 23-02-19b

We're ready now to pick up our study in a very telling section of the account of the trials of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 26, beginning in verse 66. What do you think, says Caiaphas? They answered and said, he is deserving of death. He quotes Daniel 7.13, he's deserving of death.

We had a fascinating look at the parallel to Stephen over the break in Acts chapter 7. And I encourage anyone who listens to this later to compare the charge that is brought against Stephen at the end of Acts chapter 6. And his words just before his spirit leaves his body toward the end of chapter 7. And the parallels to what the Lord Jesus has said here about the right hand of the power. But we come now to verse 67. So he is convicted.

Now picture a courtroom, a proper courtroom, a Perry Mason courtroom, where the rule of law prevails. The judge is objective and balanced. The jury is carefully sequestered and is shielded and is given the evidence that is pertinent and nothing else.

The jury is left to draw its own conclusions. And based on what they conclude, the defendant is either convicted or acquitted. But there is decorum, there is respect for the rights of the accused.

There is respect for the case on both sides. And in its ideal form, such a trial is designed to get at the truth and to accomplish justice. To implement and bring about justice.

Notice what happens here. There is no vote by the Sanhedrin. The verdict is announced by the judge when it is not a judge trial.

It's a jury trial. All decisions in capital cases had to be accomplished by the 70, by the Sanhedrin. No one individual could pronounce a sentence of death, and yet it happens here.

And you say, well, but wasn't there kind of a vote of acclamation? Here's the thing. In the legal procedures that pertained in Jesus' day, the trial and conviction had to be accomplished over two days. And never at night.

So once there is a death penalty declaration, they were required to dismiss, to wait one full day, then reconvene and affirm the sentence of death. It was never to be done in a single session, and they were never to meet in a capital case at night. They violate all of these protocols.

And in case you think that this is just a technical point and that they were not carried away by their passion and by their adrenaline and by their feeling of near success at solving a problem that has been plaguing them for the last few years. Look at the next verse. Then they spat in his face and beat him.

Others struck him with the palms of their hands. When you look at the parallels, you find that they threw a cloth over his head so that he couldn't see, and then punched him and slapped him and said, prophesy to us, Christ, who is the one who struck you? Turn with me to Isaiah chapter 50, verse six. Isaiah chapter 50, verse six.

I gave my back to those who struck me and my cheeks to those who plucked out the beard. I did not hide my face from shame and spitting. Every one of these members of the Sanhedrin has memorized this verse, and yet it does not come to their mind as they slap and punch and spit.

They do not even remember the words of Caiaphas a few weeks before that there is one who will die for the sake of the nation. Turn to Matthew chapter 12, verse 40. How many times has Jesus prophesied these events? Matthew chapter 12, verse 40 is the first in our gospel.

As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Cryptic at the time, why is he going to be in the heart of the earth? The only people placed in the heart of the earth are those who are dead, who have left the land of the living as Jonah did. You turn a few pages over to Matthew 16, verse 21.

Matthew 16, verse 21. From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised the third day. To whom did he give this prophecy? To those who could believe it and anticipate it and benefit from it.

He didn't give this in the Sermon on the Mount. He didn't give it in the Sermon on the Plain. He didn't give it when he was addressing the crowds from the boat on the seaside.

He gave it to his disciples. Turn the page to Matthew 17, verse 12. I say to you, Elijah has come already, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they wished.

Talking of John the Baptist. Likewise, the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands. Suffer at their hands.

A poignant allusion that has even a physical component, more so than just the figurative. Look down the page to Matthew 17, verse 22 and 23. While they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, Who is them? The disciples.

The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and the third day he will be raised up. A few pages over, Matthew 20, verses 18 and 19. Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify.

It doesn't get much more specific than that. And the third day he will rise again. Notice with the prediction comes the prophetic hope.

The confidence that after these indignities and this execution, he will rise again. With this, turn to Mark chapter 10. Mark chapter 10, verse 34.

In this one, you want to put a star next to. Mark chapter 10, verse 34. 33 and 34 of Mark 10.

Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes. They will condemn him to death and deliver him to the Gentiles, and they will mock him and scourge him and spit on him and kill him. And the third day he will rise again.

Here in Mark, the chief priests and scribes are lumped together with the Gentiles, and as a group together, as an entity, as a unity, they will mock him, scourge him, spit on him, and kill him. They are all complicit. They are all involved.

Turn over to Luke chapter 18, verse 32. Luke 18, verse 32. Beginning in verse 31, he took the 12 aside and said to them, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem.

All the things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. This is why we started with Isaiah 50, verse 6. And of course, there are other Isaiah parallels that you will well remember. All that was spoken by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.

For he will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. Specifically, spit upon. They will scourge him and kill him, and the third day he will rise again.

Notice how every single time Jesus anticipates his rejection, his conviction, his sentencing and execution, his mistreatment in the process of all of that taking place, he always concludes with, on the third day, he will rise again. Point of application. It is easy for us to look at our current experience and see that we are suffering, that we are mistreated, in some cases persecuted, in other cases suffering for reasons that are not our fault.

And we can anticipate, in many cases, that this is going to continue and persist into the future. Or that there is coming a day when we may be persecuted for our faith, as is already happening in many places around the world. I've mentioned before, there are websites where you can track the persecution of Christians.

It gets no news coverage in this country at all. It is hard to find international news coverage if you don't go actively looking for it. Try to keep track of what is going on in the Middle East or in Turkey if they don't have a big earthquake.

Try to keep track of what is going on in the EU and in the leadership thereof. Try to keep track of what is going on in the World Health Organization, what is going on in Africa, what is going on in Asia, what is going on in China, what is going on in Russia. Putin, bad, invading, boo.

Beyond that, what is going on in Russia? What is going on in Korea, North and South? You've got to hunt to find coverage. You've got to go to international sources to keep track of the signs of the times. Because we have filtered, slanted news from any network you want to name.

Any network. If you're restricting your information to one source, no matter how great you think it is, you will be blind, deaf and dumb to the signs of the times. If you want to be informed, and it doesn't take a lot.

I don't really agonize over the news. I don't ride the wire services and AP and Reuters and the rest of them. A little goes a long way.

But you want it to be balanced. You want it to be, we have access to what's going on in the world. Jesus, when he said, look at the sky, he didn't say, look at the ground in front of you.

Is it frosty? Is it wet? Is there dew? Is it dry? He said, look to the horizon. Look at the sky. Look at a distance to see what is coming.

So this is incumbent on us to be informed and be aware. If we are going to watch as well as pray, watching involves being reasonably well informed. It doesn't take a lot.

Don't have to obsess. And we certainly should not worry, but we should keep track what's going on. So in these situations, Jesus says, despite this suffering, the third day, the son of man will rise again.

And Jesus looks to and through the impending persecution, suffering, unjust execution to God's action. Here's what man is going to do. But here's what God is going to do.

And every single time Jesus ends with, here's what God is going to do. Man is going to do his best, but God is going to prevail. God is going to overcome.

God is going to accomplish his purpose despite the best efforts of man. The third day he will rise again. And of course we saw this in our own chapter, chapter 26 of Matthew in verse 2, in verse 24 and in verse 54.

Jesus told the disciples at the beginning of this chapter, you know that after two days is the Passover and the son of man will be delivered up to be crucified. He told them in verse 26, I'm sorry, verse 24. The son of man indeed goes just as it is written of him.

Old Testament prophecy, all that the prophets have written will be fulfilled. Woe to him,

that man by whom the son of man is betrayed. It would be good for him if he had not been born.

And then in verse 54, how then could the scriptures be fulfilled? That it must happen thus Jesus to Peter after striking off Malchus ear. So think about the concept of prophecy in verse 67 and 68. They are spitting in his face and beating him and then demanding for him to prophesy.

Show us that you know the future. Show us that you are a prophet with supernatural knowledge. Demonstrate it right here, right now.

We're going to throw a rag over your head and beat you in the face. You tell us who did it. Name the owner of the fist.

I want you to prove your divinity on my terms and I'm sure you can't do it. And unsurprisingly, Jesus does not do it. Could Jesus have named each individual slapper? Could he have told them any number of biographical details, including how they would die, including their fate upon his return when they attempt to pass under the rod and go into the promised kingdom, having perpetrated this kind of heinous evil on a wave of adrenaline-fueled emotion and passion and righteous indignation that justifies them beating a bound prisoner, which is contrary to the law of Moses.

They're convicting him for violating the law, and they are violating their own law, not just the law of Moses, but also their own code. We won't meet at night. We'll wait a day before we, to be sure that we're not going to engage in a crime of passion by convicting someone in a single session.

We'll spread it across three days and ensure that we come to the same conclusion twice. Also gives an opportunity by waiting a day for any other witnesses to come forward, any other evidence to be adduced, so that someone that is initially convicted, there is a period where they can appeal, so to speak. All of that is waived.

All of that's put aside. And this vicious, self-righteous evil of which you and I are equally capable in the flesh, if we do not resort to God's grace and God's mercy, if we do not cultivate humility, if we do not ask and seek and knock, don't think, I can't do this or you can't do this. Apart from the presence and power of God in our lives, even as believers, we can do just as evil things as this.

It's not out of the realm of possibility and it happens. Think about God-fearing, church-going slave owners, if you want an example, 150 years ago and more. So, they spat in his face.

All of this is then followed by a demand to prophesy when they slap him and beat him with his face covered. To those who were listening, to those who were following, how much prophecy has Jesus delivered and it is even now being fulfilled? Peter is going to

fulfill a prophecy that is given on this very night about the rooster crowing. Judas is going to fulfill prophecy that Jesus gave over and over again.

The Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of men. There is an abundance of prophecy in the act of being fulfilled on this night. Old Testament and new.

Old Testament prophets, their words fulfilled as these events are taking place. Being spit upon, having his beard pulled out, being beaten, stripes, Old Testament prophecy, Jesus' own words. They want Jesus to prove he's a prophet.

They are proving it in the very act of spitting in his face. They are proving Mark 10.34 and Luke 18.32. If they had been listening, they would be aware that they themselves are in the very act of fulfilling his prophecy. But like the parables, like the teaching of Jesus, it is opaque and inscrutable and completely unknown to them because of the hardness of their hearts.

Woe to us if there is even an area in our lives, if we congratulate ourselves that we are students of the Word of God, so did these men. If we congratulate ourselves that we pray, so did these men. If we congratulate ourselves that we are not like other men and we're towing a scriptural line of behavior and we're interested in what the scriptures have to say and we covet God's blessings and we hope for his presence and power in our lives, so did these men.

It is dangerously blind. Dangerously blind. What did Jesus tell these very same people in John chapter nine at the end of the chapter? They come and say, are we blind? Are we blind like this man? And Jesus said, if you were blind, you would have no sin because you would confess your blindness.

You would come to God. God would give you sight and forgiveness. But because you claim we see when you are in fact blind, you make a counterfactual claim, you convince yourself that you can see when you really don't.

Jesus said, if you could see, if you knew my Father and you understood the scriptures, you would see that those scriptures that you search for life confirm who I am. You would recognize me. You would identify me.

You're blind and you won't admit it. You refuse to believe that you could be blind. You deny even the possibility.

And because you say we see, your sin remains. And by extension, your blindness remains. And that's what you have here.

And this is the egregious outcome of that blindness. To mistreat, disrespect, mock, and spit on the Lord of glory, the Son of God. Can it get any worse than this? And these most heinous of actions are perpetrated by those who claim kinship, who claim sonship with

the God of Israel, who claim to be those who live under and defend the law of Moses, their scriptures.

They believe that they are biblically justified in what they're doing right now. And they could not be more wrong. I defy anybody to show me something more wrong than this, more blind, more arrogant, and more culpable in terms of future judgment.

Woe to him by whom these things come, not just Judas, but Caiaphas, and the 70 members of the Sanhedrin who are all in a group, congratulating themselves, egging each other on. This is the group ethos. We saw this in Proverbs 1. Join the group.

We will lie in wait for blood, and it will be very satisfying. We will acquire gain for ourselves in so doing. We will promote ourselves.

We will satisfy ourselves. This is the outcome of Proverbs 1, against which a son is warned. Prophecy to us, who is the one who struck you? Now in verse 69, Peter sat outside in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him, saying, you also were with Jesus of Galilee.

But he denied it before them all, saying, I do not know what you are saying. And when he had gone out to the gateway, another saw him. And this another, the reason they supply girl is this is feminine.

So this is another girl. You know, people deny the power of women. They say the Bible is patriarchal.

You can look at the power that the words of a woman have on Peter here, and it is no accident. It doesn't just say a servant in the generic sense. It's a girl.

It's the least threatening, most unassuming. In some versions of perception, people would say, well, this is sort of the lowest form of life. It's a girl and a servant girl at that speaking up.

The Sanhedrin wouldn't accept the testimony of women, only that of men. Women could not be witnesses in a trial, certainly not in a capital trial. Here, this girl comes up to him saying, you also were with Jesus of Galilee.

He denied it. I do not know what you're saying. When he had gone out to the gateway, he gets away from the fire where he's warming himself.

He doesn't want the light shining on his face, but he still wants to be able to see. Another girl saw him and said to others, this one also was with Jesus of Nazareth. A different girl starts, she doesn't talk to Peter.

He has left and is standing by the gate. She gestures over toward him and she says, I know who he is also. I will corroborate the testimony of my first girl witness.

And she says the very same thing. Caiaphas has spent all evening trying to find two false witnesses who will agree. Here are two genuine witnesses with no trial, no judge, no jury, just out in the courtyard.

And Peter's heart is struck with fear. And unlike Jesus who remains silent in the face of a very dangerous accusation and an overt attempt to suborn perjury and falsely accuse and convict him, Jesus is stolid. He maintains his courage, his faith, and his grip on the situation that he is not going to lend dignity to this vulgar brawl by speaking out and participating in this mock trial, this illegal, illicit trial by speaking.

He doesn't speak until the high priest places him under oath as it were and adjures him by God to make a statement. And Jesus quotes Daniel 7.13 and that's it. Peter out here is quick.

As soon as somebody makes an accusation, which is in fact true, makes an observation that is true testimony, it is the mirror image opposite of what is going on on the other side of the wall in the courtroom. A true statement is made and Peter denies it. He denied it before them all.

The other girl, this fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth. Again, he denied with an oath. What did Caiaphas just do? He tried to place Jesus under oath.

I adjure you, swear by the Most High God whether or not you are the Christ, the Son of God. Here, Peter puts himself under oath, swears in the name of all that is holy. I do not know the man.

And a little later, verse 73, you can put a note there if you check the parallel in Luke chapter 22. This is over an hour later. Peter fends off the testimony of the two girls.

And while the transport between Annas and Caiaphas and back to the back and forth that goes on, they bring him to Caiaphas, then to Annas, then back to Caiaphas. While all of this is going on, it's over an hour that passes. A little later, those who stood by came up and said to Peter, those who stood by.

Now there's been some conversation and some idle comparison of notes. And after an hour passes, and it's significant in Luke because what did Jesus say in the garden? Could you not watch with me for one hour? Well, Peter can maintain a presence outside by the fire for an hour. But then those who stood by came up and said to Peter, surely you also are one of them for your speech betrays you.

You know how people will talk and say, well, I wonder if these girls are right or not. And then somebody says, well, you know, he does talk like a Galilean. He's got a Galilean accent.

Oh yeah, that makes sense. Now that I think about it, and the testimony that you get

from one of the other gospels, I believe it's John, is that a relative of Malchus is in this group and was present when Malchus's ear was struck off and looked into the face of the man who did it, who was Peter. And so John records that a relative of Malchus came up and said, you were with him in the garden.

And that really kind of seals the deal because here is an eyewitness that says, you were with him in the time when he was being arrested. I know, and you could imagine there's more fulsome words than what are recorded by John. I know this because you cut off my cousin Malchus's ear that by the way, Jesus reattached.

You were the guy. And so at this point in verse 74, Peter begins to curse and to swear. He both curses and swears.

He uses gutter language, you know, imprecations, puts curses on himself. May I be struck by lightning if I am one of them. I swear by the most high God in heaven.

I swear by his throne. I swear, who knows what he swore by, but he is both cursing and you get the idea that this is placing himself under a curse if he is lying as well as swearing. He begins to curse and to swear.

I do not know the man. And then a rooster crows. And you get the idea that most of the people there probably paid no attention.

They did not know the significance of the crowing, but Peter did. He's the one when he hears this rooster and a rooster crow cannot be mistaken for anything else. Those of us who have roosters, have had roosters, you can hear a rooster crow, you know exactly, you can even tell which rooster it is.

They've got a very unique voice, but there's no mistaking it. It's not a hinge creaking. It's not the cawing of crows.

It's not the ringing of a bell. A rooster crowing is a unique and unmistakable sound. Peter hears the rooster crow.

And he remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, notice fulfilled prophecy. You want fulfilled prophecy? Who's getting fulfilled prophecy? The disciple who heard it from the lips of the Lord Jesus because he was with the Lord Jesus. Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.

This is when Peter leaves the fire. He leaves the gate. He goes out and weeps bitterly.

He knows the truth of the Lord Jesus prophecy. The thought I want to leave you with here is this. Is this all that Peter can do at this point? Peter recognizes the truth of the Lord Jesus prophecy.

What did Jesus just say to this very Peter when he said, put away your sword? Should it

not happen and thus, so that the scriptures are fulfilled? Should it not happen thus, so that the scriptures are fulfilled? If this prophecy of Jesus is fulfilled, what is the most profitable thing Peter can do? Weep bitterly, feel sorry for himself, kick himself for succumbing to fear and not operating in faith, being cowardly and not courageous, being a man who overturns his core beliefs for such a small pretext. A servant girl says you are with him and he immediately denies who he is and what he believes. Do we give away our faith for a small pretext? Do we succumb to fear or anger or bitterness or evil speaking on such a low pretext? Do we give away who we are and why we're here for small reasons? Someone said something about me that is not true.

Someone underestimated me. Someone wasn't grateful to me. Someone has irritated me.

Someone, somebody, it's almost always a person as here. Someone has given me occasion for stumbling. I'm gonna stumble and fall hard over such a small little impediment.

Do I not have the faith? Do I not have the presence of mind to step over that and remember who I am and why I am here? And if I do stumble, if I do fall, the best thing I can do is spend no time weeping bitterly and feeling sorry for myself, but use it as an occasion for learning and growth. What could Peter do by way of learning and growth here? I see that I have just fulfilled the words of the Lord. What else has he told me by way of prophecy? Satan has asked for you that he may sift you like wheat, but I've prayed for you, Peter, that your faith will not disappear and that afterward you can turn and encourage your brethren.

What could Peter do on this night? Over and over again, here's another prophecy of the Lord Jesus. He's gonna be turned over, but he's gonna rise again the third day. Why don't I find my brethren and tell them, you remember what Jesus said in the garden? This is happening according to scripture.

And you know what else scripture says? God is going to prevail in the end. He will rise again the third day. Let's get ready.

Let's get ready for his return. We have failed. We have scattered.

Bad things are happening. We are fearful of hardship and persecution. Instead of weeping bitterly, let's get past that.

Let's turn and strengthen one another and let's get ready for the third day. Let's end on a note of hope, not a note of failure. Let's be ready.

Bad things are happening. Bad things are happening to us. Bad things have happened to the Lord of glory, but I will rise again.

The Son of Man will be raised. He will rise again the third day. Wouldn't it have been great if when the Lord Jesus walked out of the tomb and met the ladies in the garden, they said, Lord, the disciples have been talking about nothing but your return for the last two and a half days.

Let's go see them. They can't believe it. The disciples don't believe it.

It takes a week before Thomas will believe it, and he's got to see the Lord with his own two eyes. This, by the way, is what I think will happen after the resurrection of Old Testament saints. When they see him, there are some who will be like Thomas.

Okay. I see the marks. I see the scars.

Okay. Interestingly though, in terms of Scripture, being convinced, Thomas goes on to do precisely nothing. In the book of Acts, you never see him again.

So that level of faith that requires so much evidence to even get the seed into the shallow soil is unlikely to result in a transformation. Peter, on the other hand, is going to go on to do great things, and God is going to use him mightily because he does get past this. He does eventually prepare and avail himself of the Lord's words and have confidence enough to sleep in a Roman jail.

Well, it's inspiring. It's encouraging. We need to remember not only the words of the Lord Jesus, in this world you will suffer hardship, but the conclusion of that statement, be of good cheer.

I have overcome the world. The world is going to temporarily be able to inflict hardship on you, but don't weep bitterly. Be joyful.

I have overcome the world, and this chapter in the Lord's life is what gives us the proof. We have heard the prophecy. We have heard the witness of the Lord's own words, confirming and fulfilling Old Testament prophecy.

We have every reason to believe and to anticipate and to prepare for the future fulfillment of the Lord's return and our gathering unto him. And we should not be worried or shaken in mind, as Paul tells the Thessalonians, that the day of the Lord is going to do something that we can't recover from. Don't be moved or shaken in mind.

Here's why. Prophecy. Wonderful hope.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word and the powerful presence of your spirit to guide us into that truth and to enable us to avail ourselves of its power, its strength, its illumination. We pray that having done so, we will take up the full armor that you have provided to us, that we can walk worthy of our calling, that we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds and understand your good and acceptable and perfect will.

Enter into it, be a part of it, and prepare ourselves for overcoming and victory in this life and in the life to come.

We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.