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"YE HAVE CONDEMNED THE JUST ONE."

– MATT. 26:57-68. – MARCH 10. –

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

– Matt. 16:16.

CAIAPHAS filled the office of high priest at the time of our Lord's condemnation. It was he who had already expressed himself to the effect that it was "expedient that one man should die for the nation, that the whole people should not perish" (John 11:50; 18:14), thus illustrating how God may at times use the thoughts and intentions of wicked men to express prophetically profound truths. It was indeed expedient, not only for the Jews, but also for the whole world, that a ransom should be given for Adam and his race, to the intent that they might be released from divine condemnation and ultimately be granted an opportunity for return to divine favor and life everlasting.

But so far as Caiaphas was concerned, he was probably thinking only of human expediency. He perceived the growing interest of the multitudes in Jesus of Nazareth. He realized that even the most learned of the scribes and Pharisees were no match for Jesus in doctrine and logic, and that the teachings of Jesus were so opposed to his own and the general traditions of Judaism that their acceptance must mean a religious revolution. This, he reasoned, would mean the loss of the prestige of the nation with the Romans, and the abrogation of all the rights and privileges accorded to them. So far as Caiaphas was concerned, his mind, his judgment, was already made up in respect to Jesus, and he merely sought opportunity to carry it into effect – to kill him. But being outwardly and nominally a religious [R2780 : page 92] man and a representative of justice, he felt constrained, so far as possible, to put the murder of Jesus, which he felt to be a necessity for the public good, in the light of an act of justice.

Caiaphas evidently was the ringleader in the conspiracy against Jesus. It was he and his associates who bargained with Judas; it was the under-priests and under-officers of his court and household and his servants who had been sent with Judas to arrest our Lord in the night, when he would be away from the multitudes; and we may presume that it was by his orders that our Lord was taken first to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, a man of great influence amongst the Jews, who had previously been high priest, and whose term of office had not yet expired, according to Jewish custom, altho their conquerors had forced a change in this respect, and had appointed Caiaphas chief priest instead of Annas. The sending of Jesus to Annas was evidently intended to secure his sanction to his arrest and trial, and the influence which that would imply.

When the band appeared before Annas he questioned Jesus respecting his teachings, etc., but he did not attempt a trial of the case, not having the authority. When our Lord refused to answer the questions, and referred Annas to those that had heard him, he was merely following the judicial course, and suggesting to Annas the propriety of not departing from the law in the examination of a prisoner. Annas signified his assent to the arrest by not reproving it or demanding [R2781 : page 92] his release, but sending the prisoner *bound* to Caiaphas, – thus saying by implication, I agree in your course that this man should be arrested and should be tried as a dangerous character, – dangerous to our theories and institutions.

Caiaphas had already the sympathetic cooperation of many of the leading Jews, especially of the priests, some of whom were in the "band." We may presume that the time during which the prisoner was taken to the house of Annas was occupied in despatching other messengers in various directions, to notify the members of the Council – the Sanhedrin – that the disturber of their peace had been arrested, and to assemble for his trial. It was

probably about two o'clock in the morning that Jesus was brought before Caiaphas. The Jewish law forbids the trial of a prisoner between sunset and sunrise, and any verdict secured during the unlawful hours would have been invalid, illegal. Nevertheless, the chief priest was anxious to have his case well in hand by sunrise, and to hasten as much as possible the death of the prisoner, which he had already determined upon. The matter of the trial was a mere farce anyway, but he would see what evidence he could lay before the Sanhedrin at sunrise, and hence he immediately and illegally began the examination of Jesus, calling for witnesses.

No doubt it had been freely stated that Jesus had announced his Messiahship, altho we know that this was not the case so far as the gospel narratives show. He had been very guarded in his remarks in public, and even amongst his chosen twelve disciples he had not announced himself freely, but had first drawn from Peter the declaration of our Golden Text, "Thou art the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the living God." Jesus merely acknowledged that Peter had stated the truth, and that he had been guided in the statement by the holy spirit. When, therefore, Caiaphas sought witnesses even on this point he found none capable of giving satisfactory testimony. One witness who thought he had something of importance gave a somewhat garbled account of our Lord's words respecting the Temple; but when they sought a second witness to corroborate this they could not find one who would testify exactly the same, and the Jewish Law required at least two witnesses in any such trial.

Exasperated at his poor success in securing testimony, Caiaphas determined to try a different plan, and an illegal one – to excite his prisoner so that he would make some incriminating confession. Therefore he rose up, and with a manifestation of indignation, and to give the effect that very damaging testimony had been given, he asked the prisoner if he had not heard the

testimony against him, and if he had nothing to say in self-defence. Our Lord made no response; he was not there to defend himself, and if he had been there was no need of defence. There was nothing criminal in what he had said respecting the Temple, even if it had been testified by a dozen witnesses. Caiaphas was foiled, but being a shrewd man he quickly changed his tactics, and affecting to wonder if indeed the claims of Messiah might be true he put Jesus under oath, saying, "I adjure thee [I put thee under oath] in the name of the living God; tell us whether thou be the Messiah, the Son of God."

Our Lord was not bound to answer this question, which he well knew would be used to incriminate him as a blasphemer. Nevertheless, he was not seeking to avoid death, but had already determined that the cup which the Father had given him was to be drunk, and hence he answered saying, according to John, "Thou hast said" – you have stated the truth; or, according to Mark, "Jesus said, I am" – the Messiah, the Son of God. He followed this with a declaration that those who there witnessed his humiliation and mock trial should in due time recognize him as the honored of God, sitting down at the right hand of the majesty on high, and to be revealed in the clouds of heaven as the great Judge, the Messiah.

Caiaphas could not hope to have a clearer expression, nor anything that would come nearer justifying **[R2781 : page 93]** his predetermined verdict of guilty of blasphemy, and hence with a mock expression of righteous indignation he tore his "simla" or upper garment, exclaiming, Blasphemy! We have heard blasphemy! Then, appealing to the members of the Council present, who were already in sympathy with the murderous procedure, he enquired whether or not they were satisfied with the evidence, and, as pre-arranged, they agreed that this was a clear case of blasphemy, and that Jesus was worthy of death.

Dr. C. H. Plumptre has well said: "No other words in the whole Gospel records are more decisive against the views of those who would fain see in our Lord only a great moral teacher, like Socrates or Sakya Mouni. At the very crisis of his history, when denial would have saved his life, he asserts his claim to be more than this, to be all that the most devout Christians have ever believed him to be." The *most devout* Christians are those who believe our Lord's own words without distorting them, – that he was with the Father before the world was; that the Father had sent him into the world to be its Redeemer; that "never man spake like this man;" and that he was different from all other men, in that "he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" – that the life of the man Christ Jesus was unblemished and from above. But the most devout Christians in all ages have avoided claiming for Jesus what some of the less devout Christians have claimed for him, but what he never claimed for himself; viz., that he was his own Father, Jehovah.

The most devout Christians have believed the words of Jesus, when he said, "The Father is greater than I;" and, "As the Father hath sent me, so send I you." They recognize the oneness between the Father and the Son as being, not a oneness of person, but a oneness of heart, of mind, of purpose, according to our Lord's own declaration in his prayer for his people, when he said, "I pray for them...that they may be one, *as we are* [one]." (John 17:11.) The most devout Christians acknowledge that the only one, "the man Christ Jesus," was the perfect representation of the Heavenly Father, so that he who saw the Son (who was the express image of the Father's person) saw the Father also, – in the only way in which it would be possible for mankind to see "the *invisible God*," "whom no man hath seen nor can see," but whom the Only Begotten of the Father hath revealed to men perfectly. – John 1:18.

Thoughtful and *intelligently devout* Christians, when they examine the words of our Lord in this connection, can see nothing in them whatever to the effect that our Lord Jesus here contradicted the other plain statements of his testimony, but rather they find it in full conformity. Nor did the Jews for one moment think that our Lord meant that he was the Heavenly Father. This was not the question asked: they had no expectation that Messiah would be Jehovah, but Jehovah's representative, and agent, the Son of God, "The Messenger [servant] of the Covenant, whom ye delight in." (Mal. 3:1.) The charge of blasphemy against our Lord was based upon his claim of being a Son of God – not the Father himself. The charge was made on a previous occasion (John 10:29-36), when the accusers expressly declared his crime was that of calling himself a son of God; – that thus he was placing himself on a parity with God, as being of the same kind or nature. On that occasion Jesus answered their quibble by quoting them from the Psalms, where all of the Lord's consecrated people, the Gospel Church, are called "sons of God," and he pointed out to them that he merely claimed the same title that was there freely given to those who would come into that relationship, through justification of faith, whereas he himself had always been a Son of God in full harmony with the Father.*

*For a treatise of this subject, and of the expression, "Son of Man," see MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. V., Chap. 6. [[Intended reference is probably Chapter 7 - Site Editor]]

When this session of the Sanhedrin, or court, broke up it was to wait until sunrise, when the formal meeting took place, and the verdict of blasphemy would be reaffirmed, and thus have the semblance of legality. (Matt. 27:1.) Meantime our Lord stood bound in the high priest's palace court for probably three hours, and it was during this interim that the high priest's servants, etc., took occasion to show their sympathy with the great ones by abusing the prisoner. Some spat upon him; others smote him

with their hands and with sticks, and in general displayed their littleness and meanness. A favorite diversion with them seems to have been, after blindfolding him, to smite him and enquire whether or not he were prophet enough to name his tormentor. All these things our Lord endured, so far as the record shows, without a murmur. He accepted this all as a part of the cup which the Father had prepared for him; and the Apostle, evidently referring partly to these experiences, says, "Consider him who endured such contradictions of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood." (Heb. 12:3,4.) If we refuse the cup the Father prepares for us it will only return to us later perhaps with a more bitter draught: and if avoided entirely we cannot have share with our Lord in the glory, honor and immortality for which the trying experiences now permitted are our preparation.

The servant is not above his Lord, and if they have smitten and spit upon and buffeted the Master, none of the servants should be surprised or complain if they should have somewhat similar experiences. And when such things come to them while in the line **[R2782 : page 94]** of duty they are to esteem them as our Lord did, part of the cup which the Father has prepared, and they are to endure them without murmuring; on the contrary, as the Apostle suggests, they may give thanks that they are counted worthy to suffer some of the reproaches of Christ. – Col. 1:24; 2 Tim. 1:18; 2:3; Jas. 5:11.

But the Apostle urges, "Let none of you suffer as an evil-doer nor as a busybody in other men's matters." If suffering should come upon us justly for our faults, we could not glory in it, but rather be ashamed; but if any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed – if he suffer for the truth's sake, for righteousness' sake. It may be urged by some that sufferings cannot come now, in our enlightened day, and when the name of Jesus is popular; but, we answer: Yes; it is still true, as the

Apostle said, "Whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Many now claim the name of Jesus who know not Jesus nor the Father, and who have not his spirit, just as many at that time delighted in the name of Moses, and sat in his seat as Doctors of the Law, yet knew not, appreciated not, the law of Moses and the law of God. – 1 Pet. 4:15,16; 2 Tim. 3:12.
