

CHRIST IN BONDS

NO. 2822

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 15, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

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“Now Annas had sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.”

(The Revised Version says, “Annas therefore sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest”).

John 18:24.

OUR only subject, on this occasion, is CHRIST IN BONDS—the Son of God as an Ambassador in bonds, a King in chains—the God-man sent, bound—to take His trial in the court of the high priest, Caiaphas.

It seems to me that this binding of our Lord shows, first, something of fear on the part of His captors. Why did they bind Him? He would not attack them. He had no desire to escape out of their hands, yet, they probably thought that He might break loose from them, or in some way outwit them. Alas, that men should ever have been thus afraid of Him who came alone from heaven, neither bearing arms nor wearing armor—who came to injure none, nor even to protect Himself against the harm that any might inflict upon Him—at first, lying as a babe in a manger, and all His life exhibiting rather the weakness of His manhood than its strength! Yet His adversaries were often afraid of Him. So it still is—there is a latent, secret conviction in the minds of men that the Christ is greater than He seems to be. Even when they attack Him with their infidel weapons, they never seem to be satisfied with their own arguments, so they are continually seeking fresh ones. To this very day the ungodly are afraid of Christ, and often their raging against Him resembles the noise made by the boy who, when hurrying through the graveyard, whistles to keep his courage up!

They also bound Christ, no doubt, to increase the shame of His condition. Our Savior said to those who came to arrest Him in the garden, “Have you come out as against a thief, with swords, and with staves to take Me?” And now they bound Him fast as though He were a thief—perhaps tied His hands behind His back with tight cords, to show that they regarded Him a felon, and that they were not taking Him into a civil court where some cases of law might be pending, but they already condemned Him by the very act of binding Him! They treated Him as if He were already sentenced, and not worthy to stand, a free man, and plead for Himself before the judgment seat. Oh, what a shame that the Lord of life and glory should be bound—that He, whom angels delight to worship—that He who is the very sun of their heaven should yet be bound as though He were a malefactor, and be sent away to be tried for His life!

We may also look at this matter of the binding of the Savior as an increase of His pain. I suppose none of you have ever been bound as our Lord was at that time. If you had been, you would know the discomfort and pain which must attend such action. John tells us that in Gethsemane, “the band and the captain, and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him.” He had scarcely risen from His knees—and the bloody sweat was like fresh ruby dew upon Him—yet these men “bound Him and led Him away to Annas first.” I do not find any indication that His bonds were unloosed by Annas, or that He had even a moment's relief or relaxation granted to Him. But, with the cruel ropes still binding Him fast, He was sent across the great hall into the other wing of the palace in which Caiaphas resided.

“Annas sent Him bound unto Caiaphas.” Then this, surely, must have been done in very wantonness of malice. I have already said that they seemed to have some sort of fear that their captive would, after all, escape from them. Yet they might, readily enough, have banished that fear from their minds. There was

no need to bind HIM! O cruel persecutors, look into His face! If you are resolved to lead Him away to His death, you may lead Him like a sheep goes to the slaughter. He will not even open His mouth to upbraid you! There was no need to put any bands upon One so gentle as He was. Out of very wantonness, I say, they must have done it, that they might express their hatred by every conceivable method, both in the little details, and in the great end at which they were aiming all the while—namely, to put Him to a most painful death. Ah, me, how shamefully was our blessed Master maltreated in this inhospitable world! Men had often been regicides, and we need not wonder at that when we think what tyrants they were who were thus slain—but these men were turning to *deicide*—putting to death the Son of God, Himself! And before they did it, they heaped upon Him every mark of scorn and dishonor that was possible, that they might cause Him to die with opprobrium as well as with pain.

You who love your Savior will think with tender sympathy of how He was bound by these wicked men. My special objective is to try to find out what are the lessons which we may learn from the bonds of Christ.

I. The first lesson is this. From the binding of our dear Redeemer, I learn a lesson concerning sin. **THE BONDS OF CHRIST TEACH US WHAT SIN WOULD DO TO GOD IF IT COULD.**

The unregenerate heart, in its enmity against God, would treat Him exactly as the men of 1900 years ago treated the Son of God. What was done to Jesus is just what man would do, if he could, to the Lord God of heaven and earth, Himself. “What?” you say, “would men bind God?” Ah, sirs, they would do much more than that if they could, but they would certainly do that! They would annihilate God if they could, for, “the fool has said in his heart, No God”—that is to say, “No God for me!” He would kill God if it were possible! There would be no gladder news to many men who are living today than for them to be informed, with absolute certainty, that there was no God at all! All their fears would be at once silenced by such tidings. As for us who love and trust Him, all our joys would be gone, and our worst fears would be realized if God were gone. But, as for the ungodly, it would be the best news that was ever rung out from church steeples if they could be assured that God was dead! They would kill Him if they could, but, as they cannot kill Him, they seek to bind Him.

Observe how they try to do this *by denying His power*. There are many men who say that they believe in God, yet what sort of god is it in whom they believe? It is a god who is fettered by his own laws. “Here is the world,” they say, “but let not anyone suppose that god has anything to do with the world.” They seem to have a theory that somehow or other it got wound up, like a great clock, and it has been going on ever since! Their god has not even been to see it—indeed, the probability is that he cannot see! Their god does not see, and does not know anything—he is not the living God. They pretend to pay Him the compliment of saying that there may be some great first cause—they do not know even that, for certain, because they do not know anything. We live in an age in which the man who professes to be a learned man, calls himself “an agnostic”—a Greek word which, in the Latin, signifies, “an ignoramus.” That is, when you get to be a very clever man, then you become an ignoramus, knowing nothing at all! Such people go crowing, all over the world, that they do not know anything at all! They do not know whether there is any God at all, or if there is a God; they do not know that He has anything to do with the world. They say that it is going on just on its own. Their god may set worlds going if he pleases, but he has nothing do with them afterwards.

Ah, beloved, the truth is that God’s laws are simply the ways in which He acts. There is no force in the world apart from God. All the potency of attraction is simply because God lives, and pour His energy into the matter that attracts. Every moment it is God who works in all things according to the good pleasure of His own will. Omnipotence is, in fact, the source of all the potency that there is in the universe. God is everywhere, and instead of being banished from the world, and the world going on without Him, if God were not here, this planet, the sun, moon and stars, would retire into their native nothingness as a moment’s foam subsides into the wave that bears it and is gone forever! God alone IS. All the rest—call them what you please—are appearances that come out of His ever-existing power. God IS. The other things may be or may not be, but God IS. Well did David write, under the Spirit’s inspiration, “God has spoken once; twice have I heard this: that power belongs unto God.” But that is not the kind of god that the ungodly want—they want one whose hands they can bind so as to make him powerless!

Especially will they do this *with regard to providence*. “Look,” they say, “you Christian people pray, and you are foolish enough to believe that because you pray, God hears you, and sends you the blessings that you ask for.” It is assumed that we are fools, but, I think, it is a mere assumption! Probably these gentlemen who are so generous in disposing of their epithets, may be giving away what really belongs to them! We are fools, so they say. These men of culture, the thinking people—at least they are the people who call themselves by these high-sounding names, and, having done so, to prove that their culture has made perfect gentlemen of them—they call all the rest of us, and especially all Christians, fools! Well, we are not anxious to contend with them as to that matter, and we are quite satisfied to take the position that we do take—and to be called fools—because we believe that God does hear and answer our petitions! Even when these people are willing to acknowledge that there is a god in providence at all, his hands are tied so that he can do nothing! Well, as far as I am concerned, I would as soon believe in a god made out of the mud of the Ganges, or in the fetish of the Hottentot, as bow my knee to a god who could not hear and could not answer me!

Some unbelievers talk of a god whose hands are bound *so far as the punishment of sin is concerned*. “Men will die like dog,” so some of these doggish men say. “God will not punish sin,” say some sinners who imagine that they have prepared a dunghill for themselves to fall upon whenever God shall fling them out of the window as utterly worthless! They imbibe ideas that are contrary to the truth of God about the Most High in order that they may be able to sin with impunity. But, whatever they may think or say, let us rest assured that there *is* a God, and that He is a God before whom every one of us must appear to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they are good, or whether they are evil. We may be quite certain that although, in His long-suffering, He may patiently wait a while before punishing iniquity, yet His hands are not bound, and He will lift them before long! And when He raises a hand to strike the man who has broken His laws, He will do it so effectually that the sinner shall know that, truly, there is a God who will not pass by transgression, or wink at sin when it remains unrepented of! Let us, then, be always happy to hear our testimony that God cannot be bound, but let us always expect to see unconverted men, in one way or another, attempting to bind the hands of the Most High as these sinners in Jerusalem bound the Christ of God.

Some people think that God ought to do this, and He ought *not* to do that. And the moment you begin to reason with them, they do not refer to what the Scriptures say, but they have a preconceived notion as to what ought to be done or not done. That is to say, you could tie His hands so that *He must do what you judge to be right*. But if He judges any particular course to be right, and it does not meet your tastes, then, straightway, you will either have no god at all, or else a god that shall be handcuffed by your reason, and held in bonds to do your bidding! In the person of our blessed Master brought from Gethsemane with His hands tightly bound, we see an exact picture of what wicked men would always do with God if they could, and what they actually do to Him, spiritually, in their own minds and hearts. God save us from being guilty of such a sin as that! Oh, that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ may cleanse that sin away if it lies as a load upon the conscience of anyone whom I am now addressing!

II. Secondly, we have here A LESSON OF LOVE.

Our Lord Jesus was sent away, bound, by Annas to Caiaphas, but, before they bound Him, there were other bands upon Him. *Christ was bound by the cords of love*, and who but Himself had bound Him thus? Of old, or before the earth was, His prescient eye foresaw all His people, and their sin—and He loved them, and He gave Himself to them, then, in the eternal purpose. And often did He look through the vista of the ages upon the men and women who were yet to be born, and with a near and dear love to each one of them, He pledged Himself that, for them, He would bear the shame and the spitting—and that He would even die in their place that He might redeem them unto Himself. So, when I see our Divine Master thus led to the judgment seat, I grieve over the bonds of cord with which men tied Him, but my heart exults over those invisible bands with which He bound Himself on purpose, by covenant, by oath, by infinite, immutable love, that He would give Himself to be a ransom for His people!

Then, following upon those cords of love, if you look closely, you will see His love again displayed in that *He was bound with our bonds*. We, dear friends, had sinned against God, and so had incurred the sentence of infallible justice. And now that sentence must fall upon Him! We ought to have been bound,

but Christ was bound instead of us. If you and I had been bound with despair, and hopelessly led away to that prison from which none shall ever escape—if this had been the moment when we were commencing to feel the torments of the hell which our sins deserve—what could we have said? But, lo, in our place Jesus is led away to bear the wrath of hell!

He must not lift His hands in His own defense, or raise a finger for His own comfort, for He is bearing—

*“That we might never bear
His Father’s righteous ire.”*

III. But now, thirdly, learn here A LESSON OF GREAT PRIVILEGE.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was bound, and there flows from that fact its opposite—*then His people are all free*. When Christ was made a curse for us, He became a blessing to us! When Christ was made sin for us, we were made the righteousness of God in Him! When He died, then we lived! And so, as He was bound, we were set free. The type of that exchange of prisoners is seen in the fact that Barabbas was set free when the Lord Jesus Christ was given up to be crucified. And still more in His plea for His disciples in the garden, “If therefore you seek Me, let these go their way.” It is with wondrous joy in our hearts that we sing—

*“We were sore in bondage bound,
But our Jesus set us free.”*

Do you think we, dear friends, use our liberty as we should? Do we not, sometimes, pray to God as if we were tongue-tied, and had the bonds upon our tongue? Do we not go to the great coffers full of grace, and, instead of helping ourselves, as we have the right to do, we stand there as if our hands were bound, and we could not take a single pennyworth of the abundant fullness that is laid up there for us? Sometimes when there is work to be done for Christ, we feel as if we were in bonds. We dare not stretch out our hands—we are afraid to do so—yet Jesus has set us free! O believer, why do you go about as if you still wear shackles on your ankles? Why do you stand like one who is still in bonds? Your freedom is sure freedom, and it is righteous freedom! Christ, the great Emancipator, has made you free, and you are “free indeed.” Enjoy your liberty! Enjoy access to God! Enjoy the privilege of claiming the promises which God has given to you! Enjoy the exercise of the power with which God has endowed you! Enjoy the holy anointing with which the Lord has prepared you for His service! Do not sit and mope like a bird in a cage when you are free to soar away! I can conceive of a bird that has been in a cage for years—the cage may be all taken away—every wire of it, and yet the poor thing has been so accustomed to sit on that perch inside the cage, that it takes no notice of the fact that its prison is gone! And there it sits, and mopes. Away with you, sweet songster! The green fields, and the blue sky are all your own. Stretch your wings and soar away above the clouds—and sing the carol of your freedom as though you would make it reach the ears of the angels! So let it be with your spirit, and with mine, beloved! Christ has set us free! Therefore let us not go back into bondage, or sit still as though we were in prison—let us rejoice in our liberty this very hour and let us do so all our days!

IV. The fourth lesson from the binding of Christ is A LESSON OF OBLIGATION.

This may seem like a paradox in contrast with the previous lesson, yet it is equally true. Beloved, was Jesus bound for you, and for me? *Then let us be bound for Him, and to Him!* I rejoice in the sweet inability that results from perfect love to Christ. “Inability?” you ask. Yes, I mean inability. The true child of God “cannot sin, because he is born of God.” There are many other things that he cannot do. He cannot forsake His Lord, for he says with Peter, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” He cannot forget his obligations. He cannot withhold his time, his strength, his substance from His Lord. He cannot become an earthworm, and a money-grabber. He cannot wed his soul to any other, for Christ has espoused him to Himself as a chaste virgin. There are times when the child of God says, with Nehemiah, “Should such a man as I flee?” Or, “How can such a privileged individual as I am indulge in such-and-such a sin?” The ungodly sometimes jeer at us, and say, “Ah, you cannot do such-and-such! We can.” And we reply, “We have lost no power that we ever wished to have, but we have gained the power of concentrating all our force upon righteousness, and the truth of God. And now our heart is bound too fast to Christ for us to go after your idols. Our eyes are now so taken up with the sight of our Savior that we

cannot see any charms in the things with which you would bewitch us. Our memory is now so full of Christ that we have no desire to pollute the precious stores that lie therein by memories of sin.”

Henceforth we are crucified with Christ, and that brings to us a blessed inability in which we greatly rejoice! Our heart may stir, perhaps, a little, but our hands and feet are fastened to the wood, and cannot move. Oh, blessed is the inability when, at last, neither heart can love, nor brain can think, nor hand can do, nor even imagination can conceive anything that goes beyond the sweet circle of a complete consecration to the Lord, and absolute dedication to His service! Come, then, you angels of the Lord, and bind us to Him! Let this be the prayer of every believer—“Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.” Let nothing ever tempt us away from our Lord. You may count the cost of all Egypt’s treasure, and then let it go—and it shall vanish like a dream, for there is nothing in it—

*“Solid joys and lasting treasure,
None but Zion’s children know”—*

and these shall remain with you who are bound to Christ—with Him to live, and for Him to die, if necessary. So, whenever we see Christ in bonds, let us pray that we, also, may wear His bonds, and be just as much bound as He was. “O God,” let every Christian say, “I am Your servant, and the son of Your hand-maid. You have loosed my bonds, now bind me to Yourself, and to Your blessed service once and for all!”

V. The last lesson is one which I pray that we may all learn whether we are saints or sinners. It is A LESSON OF WARNING.

Dear friends, I have tried to picture, though I have done it in a very feeble way, Christ being bound with cords. And now I want to very solemnly say to all of you—Do not bind Christ with cords. Beware, you who are unconverted, that you never bind Christ. You may do so *by not reading His Word*. You have a Bible at home, but you never read it—it is clasped, laid away in a drawer with your best pocket handkerchiefs. Is it not so? That is another picture of Christ in bonds—a poor shut-up Bible that is never allowed to speak with you—no, not even to have half a word with you, for you are in such a hurry about other things that you cannot listen to it! Untie the cords—let it have its liberty! Commune with it sometimes. Let the heart of God in the Bible speak to your own heart. If you do not, that clasped Bible, that shut-up Bible—that precious Book hidden away in the drawer—is Christ in prison, and, one day, when you little expect it, you will hear Christ say, “Inasmuch as you did this to the greatest of all My witnesses, you did it unto Me.” You kept Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and all the prophets in prison! And all the apostles, and the Master, Himself, you bound with cords, and you would not hear a word that they had to say! Let not that be true of any one of you, dear friends.

There are others *who will not go to hear the Word*. They do not attend any place of worship. They may have dropped in here once, but, as a rule, they never go anywhere to worship God. Here in London people live in the street where there is a soul-saving ministry, yet many of them never cross the threshold of the house of prayer. In some streets, not one in a hundred ever darkens the doors of the place where God’s people gather for worship. Is not that tying Christ’s hands? How can the gospel get to people who will not hear it—absolutely refuse to listen to it? They are really gagging our blessed Master, and that is even worse than binding Him with cords! They thrust a gag in His mouth, and make Him hold His tongue, as far as they are concerned. Some of them, if they could, would gag the messenger as well as His Master, for they do not want him. “Trouble us not,” they say. “Are you come to torment us before the times.” And so they bind Christ, and send Him away, just as Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas.

There are some who both read the Bible, and go to hear the gospel, but they tie Christ up, all the same, by prejudice. Some people can never get a blessing through certain ministers because they have made up their minds that they will not be profited by them. You know how they come, with some preconceived notion, and though an angel from heaven were to speak, they would pick holes in whatever he might say because of the prejudice which exists in their minds. Probably they can give no better reason for their antagonism than the person gave who did not like Dr. Fell—

*“I do not like you, Dr. Fell,
The reason why, I cannot tell.
But this I know and know full well,
I do not like you, Dr. Fell.”*

I have known men bind Christ in another way, *by delaying their decision*. They have heard a sermon, and have felt its power—their soul has been impressed by it—but their chief idea has been to try to escape from Christ, or to bind His hands, if possible. I think I have told you before that once, when I was preaching in the country, the gentleman with whom I stayed, suddenly got up, towards the end of the sermon, and went out. And a dear friend who had gone with me, followed him outside, and asked him, “What brought you out here?” He replied, “If I had stayed there another five minutes, I would have got converted. Mr. Spurgeon seems to treat me just as if I were made of India rubber—he squeezes me into any shape he likes—so I was obliged to come out.” “But,” my friend said, “might it not have been a great blessing to you if you had been converted?” “Well, no,” he replied, “at least, not just now. I have some things in prospect that I really should not miss, so I cannot afford to be converted just now.” There are others who do not act quite like that, but the result is the same. They say, by their actions, if not in so many words, “Now, Lord, I am going to tie You up for a little while. I mean to give heed to You, by-and-by. I hope Your blessed hand will be laid upon me for my salvation, but not just now, please—not just now.” Such people always use silken cords, but the binding is just as effective as it would be if they took an ugly pair of handcuffs, such as a policeman pulls out for a thief. The man says, “Permit me, Lord, to tie Your hands for just a little while—another month, perhaps—possibly another year.” Oh, that accursed procrastination! How many have been ruined to all eternity by it! It is the bond that binds the hands of Christ, the Savior, who says, “Now is the day of salvation.”

Other men bind the hands of Christ *by seeking pleasure in sin*. After having been impressed under a sermon, they go straight to some ungodly meeting place—a bar, perhaps, or the next day they go into society where every serious thought will, in all probability, be stamped out as men stamp out a fire! And what is this but binding the hands of Christ? I know some—I tremble as I think of them—who persistently do that which they know will prevent them from ever feeling the power of the Word of God. Oh, that, by some means, they could be wrenched out of their present position, and be carried right away where the truth of God might influence them so that they might be led to Jesus’ feet! I think I hear someone say, “That is a shocking way to bind Christ’s hands.” Then mind, my friend that you do not fall into that sin!

Now, in closing I need to speak to the Lord’s own people for just a minute or two.

Do you not think, beloved, that you and I have sometime tied Christ’s hands? You remember reading this sentence, “He could not do many mighty works there”? His hands were tied, but what tied them? Finish the quotation—“*because of their unbelief*.” Are there not many churches where they have tied the hands of Christ because they do not believe He can do any mighty works there? If the Lord Jesus Christ were to convert 3000 people at one time, under their pastor’s preaching, what do you think the deacons and elders of that church would probably say? “Well, we never thought that we would see such excitement as this—to think that it should have come into our place of worship! We must be very careful. No doubt these people will be wanting to join the church. We shall have to summer them, and winter them—and try them a good deal—we do not like such excitement.” Ah, sirs, you need not trouble yourselves with any such expectation! God is not likely to give such a blessing to you—He never sends His children where they are not wanted, and, as a rule—until He prepares His people to receive the blessing, the blessing will not come!

Do you not think, also, that *a minister may very easily tie the hands of Christ*? I am afraid I have done so, sometimes, without meaning to. Suppose I were to preach some very fine sermons—I do not do that, mark you—but just *suppose* I were to preach some very fine sermons that went right over people’s heads? And what if a good old woman were to say, “I would not have the presumption to understand it, but it was very wonderful”—do you not think that I would be tying Christ’s hands with garlands of flowers? And may we not come into the pulpit, and talk a lot of theological jargon, and use words which are appropriate to us in the classroom, but quite misunderstood, or never understood at all by the mass of the people? Is not that tying Christ’s hands? And when a preacher is what they call very “heavy”—by which is not meant that he is weighty—but dull! Or when he is very cold and heartless, and preaches as if he were working by the piece, and would be glad to get it all over—when that is the case, do you not think that Christ’s hands are tied? Have you never heard sermons of which you might fairly say, “Well, if God were to

convert anybody by *that* discourse, it certainly would be a miraculous kind of miracle—something altogether out of the common way of miracles, for He would be using an implement that was positively calculated to produce just the opposite effect—and making it accomplish His purposes of grace”? I have heard such sermons, now and then, to my great sorrow. And you Sunday school teachers must take care that you do not so teach as really to be hindrances to your scholars rather than helps, for that is to tie the hands of Christ—and to lead Him into your class like Samson—bound to make sport for Philistines, than to get honor to Himself. May we all have the grace given to us to avoid such an evil as that!

And do you not think, dear friends, that we who love Christ bind His hands *when we are cowardly and retiring, and never say a word for Him?* How can the gospel save sinners if it is never spoken to them? If you never introduce Christ to your companions—never put a little book on your friend’s table, never try to say a word about the Savior to him—is not that tying Christ’s hands? The next thing to having no Christ at all is for the church to be silent concerning Him! It is an awful thing to contemplate what it would be if there were no Savior, but what difference is it if there is a Savior, but men never hear of Him? Come, you very timid people, do not excuse yourselves any longer! “Oh, but,” says one, “I always was of a very timid disposition.” So was that soldier who was shot for running away in the day of battle! He was guilty of cowardice, and was put to death for it. If you have been, up to the present time, binding the Master by your retiring spirit, you should at once come forward and declare what Christ has done for you, that, with unbound hands, He may do the same for others!

And do you not think that *whenever we are inconsistent in our conduct*—especially in the family—we tie the hands of Christ? There is a father praying for his children that they may live before God. Five minutes later, listen to Him! Why, his boys hate the sight of him! He is such a tyrant to them that they cannot endure him. There is a mother, too, who is praying God to save her daughters. She goes upstairs, and pleads very earnestly for them. Yet she comes down, and lets them have whatever they ask for, and never says a word by way of checking them in their evil courses! She acts like a female Eli to every one of them—is not she tying the hands of Christ? What can she expect but that God, who works according to rules, will be more likely to let her unkind kindness influence her girls for evil, than to answer her prayers for their conversion? Let us be *holy*, dear friends, for then we shall, by faith, see the holy God freely moving and working among us—and doing great deeds to His own glory! So may He do, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 14:53-65; LUKE 22:63-71; 23:1.

The passages which we are about to read from two of the Evangelists, make up a continuous narrative of our Lord’s trial before the high priest.

Mark 14:53, 54. *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests, and the elders, and the scribes. And Peter followed Him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.* We may regard what was said to Jesus, by Annas and Caiaphas, as a sort of unofficial preliminary examination, and, meanwhile, their fellow conspirators were scouring the streets of Jerusalem to gather together the members of the Sanhedrim—and also searching among the slums in order to find witnesses who could be bribed to give false evidence against Jesus.

55. *And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none.* A pretty court that was, occupied in seeking for witnesses who might enable them to condemn to death a prisoner against whom no charge had yet been formulated!

56-59. *For many bore false witness against Him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain ones, and bore false witness against Him, saying, We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together.* It was a rule that they should be examined separately, but there had not been time for them to be coached as to what they were to say, so one contradicted the other, and it looked as if the trial must break down.

60. *And the high priest stood up in the midst.* Losing all patience, he stood up, in a furious rage at the way things were taking.

60, 61. *And asked Jesus, saying, Do You answer nothing? What is it which these witness say against You? But He held His peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, and said unto Him, are You the Christ? The Son of the Blessed?* This time, according to Matthew's account, the high priest said to Jesus, "I command You by the living God that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." Being thus, as it were, put upon His oath, the Savior felt compelled to answer. He could not remain silent when such a great and important question was at stake.

62-65. *And Jesus said, I am: and you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest tore his clothes, and said, What need we of any further witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy: what do you think? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, prophesy: and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands.* Perhaps we have the same narrative in Luke. Possibly, however, he gives us a continuation of the sad story—it is difficult to say which is the case.

Luke 22:63-71. *And the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and struck Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, prophesy, who is it that struck You? And many other things blasphemously spoke they against Him. And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests, and the scribes came together, and led Him into their council, saying, Are You the Christ? Tell us. And He said unto them, If I tell you, you will not believe: and if I also ask you, you will not answer Me, nor let me go. Thereafter shall the Son of man sit at the right hand of the power of God. Then they all said, Are You, then, the Son of God? And He said unto them, You say that I am. And they said, of what need we any further witness? For we ourselves have heard from His own mouth.*

Luke 23:1. *And the whole multitude of them arose, and led Him unto Pilate.*

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