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Jesus on Trial (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In his discussion of the trial of Jesus, Steve Gregg examines the hypocritical charges brought against him in Jewish and Roman courts. Despite his disciples' denials and the violation of Jewish laws during the trial, Jesus remained steadfast and defended his words. The importance of confessing one's faith in Jesus is emphasized, as evidenced by Peter's repentance and restoration to church leadership. Additionally, the idea of resisting evil by speaking out against injustice is explored, emphasizing the importance of being a conscience to the world.

Transcript

At this point in our study of the life of Christ, we're going to have to move from passage to passage again, as we did yesterday. Again, we are focusing now on one of the, well, I suppose it's the portion of the life of Christ, for which the greatest number of chapters and verses are given, proportionately to the length of time of the subject matter. Is your pen up here? Okay.

There you go. The time frame of the subject matter is, of course, from the time of the Last Supper to the time of the crucifixion of Jesus. And all together, that is less than 24 hours, less than one day.

And yet we've had several chapters in John describing the events of the Upper Room. Likewise, there's a number of chapters in all of the Gospels that go through the sequence of events from the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and his various hearings before different bodies. And I think I mentioned yesterday, if not, or even if I did, I'll say it again, in the course of one night, Jesus probably didn't get any sleep that night, by the way, he was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane after dark, because we're told that even when Judas left the Upper Room, it says it was night out.

So sometime even later than that, they went to Gethsemane. Those who came to arrest him were carrying torches, so we assume it was already after dark at that time. The first place that he was taken after his arrest was to the house of Annas, who was really the, he was kind of a lame duck high priest.

He had been the high priest before the Romans changed that. I don't know if they, I think they were threatened by his popular support from the Jewish community. So they deposed him and placed his son-in-law, Caiaphas, in the position of high priest.

So Caiaphas was really legally the high priest, but Annas was the one that many of the Jews, I think, looked up to as the real high priest of God. He was the older high priest and no one had deposed him except the Romans, and the Jews didn't much appreciate the Romans and their decisions anyway. So Annas, I think, was a high priest who had the respect of the Jews, but no actual political power.

But it is before Annas, at his own home, that Jesus first was taken. And there's a little bit told to us about this in John chapter 18. The other Gospels don't mention to us that Jesus stood before Annas, but they go directly to his standing before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin as a gathered body.

There was, after the house of Annas, from what I could deduce from all the passages, a gathering of the Sanhedrin, the same night. And Jesus was taken from the house of Annas to the Sanhedrin's, probably to their chambers, their court chambers, and he stood trial that night before them. Then when dawn came, which could have only been a very few hours later, the Sanhedrin reconvened.

They must have adjourned temporarily, and then they reconvened as soon as it was dawn. And so there was a second trial before the Sanhedrin. The purpose of the second trial was principally, it would appear, since they condemned him in the evening trial of blasphemy, they realized that the Romans, whose permission they needed to crucify Jesus, the Romans would not be the least bit concerned about a charge of blasphemy against the Jewish God.

What would the Romans care about that? They'd gladly blaspheme the Jewish God without confusion. So they wouldn't be interested in condemning a man to die because he blasphemed Jehovah. Therefore, the second convening of the Sanhedrin, which took place at dawn, was in order to find some different charges, some additional charges, which they could trump up and take before Pilate, the Roman official, in order to try to get his official for a capital sentence.

Now, the hypocrisy of this is manifest in the fact that the charge they came up with was that Jesus had taught that people should not pay tribute to Caesar, that he was a king and he was against Caesar in that respect, that he was guilty of treason against the emperor. Now, the interesting thing about that, of course, is that if those charges were true, they wouldn't concern the Sanhedrin at all. They'd probably see Jesus as a hero, in fact, if Jesus had forbidden people to pay taxes to Caesar.

I mean, that was the popular feeling and sentiment of the Jews and probably many of the Sanhedrin as well. If Jesus had, in fact, gone against Caesar, that would not be anything

for which the Sanhedrin would have wanted to put him to death. Blasphemy was, of course, that's not even their real reasons either.

Pilate discerned their real reasons, we read in John's Gospel. He knew it was jealousy that caused the Sanhedrin to bring Jesus to them. But the charge that the Sanhedrin could find guilt worthy of death was a blasphemy, but that wouldn't concern the Romans.

So they came up with another charge to bring before the Romans, which wouldn't have concerned the Sanhedrin, and that is that he was an instigator of rebellion against Rome. Neither charge, of course, was valid, but the hypocrisy is that they acted as if, when they came to Pilate, their concern was for the good of Rome, and that this man had been an insurgent, and therefore he ought to be crucified. Pilate knew better than to think the Jews would care anything about that, and he was very suspicious of them, as we can see.

So anyway, this was the second convening of the Sanhedrin, and that was to find out some charges by which they could accuse Jesus effectively before Rome. Then, having stood before the Sanhedrin twice, that is, before Annas the night before, before the Sanhedrin under Caiaphas the night before, then before the Sanhedrin under Caiaphas in the morning, they then took him to Pilate. This is recorded in John chapter 18 and the other Gospels.

And Pilate talked to Jesus for a while and couldn't find any fault with him, in fact, got very nervous about this whole situation. First of all, he was no doubt impressed by Jesus' demeanor. Secondly, he couldn't figure out what the Jews really had against this guy, since the charges they were bringing, obviously, Pilate knew the Jews well enough to know they couldn't have cared less whether those charges were true or not.

And he just felt like he was out of his depth and didn't know what was going on. And when he found out that Jesus had hailed from Galilee, not Judea, that Jesus was a Galilean, Pilate seemed to be relieved to learn of it, because Herod, who had jurisdiction over Galilee, happened to be in town at the time for the festival of Passover. So he said, oh, you're a Galilean, you can go stand before Herod, he happens to be in town.

And so Jesus was sent before Herod, which was his second trial before Romans. And Herod was unimpressed with Jesus and eventually sent him back to Pilate, and Pilate got stuck with the job of condemning him. So Jesus stood trial three times before Jewish courts and three times before Roman courts, six times.

He stood trial within probably no more than 12 hours, probably less, considerably less than 12 hours. Okay, now, we're in John 18, because it is here that we read, and only here, that we read about the trial before Annas. As I said, the other Gospels leave this out, but it's clearly the first place that Jesus was taken, and we're talking about John 18, verses 12 through 27.

Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the 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 the high priest that year. Now, it was Caiaphas who gave counsel to the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, referring back to something John had told us back in chapter 11.

He wants us to know that's the same guy. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple, who must have been John, since he's not named, and that's the pattern in this Gospel, to not name himself. Now, that disciple, that John, was known to the high priest for some reason.

Somehow John was acquainted, and not only acquainted, but in some degree, on good terms, with Annas. Now, the fact that Annas was against Jesus and John was for Jesus may not have been brought to the attention of Annas. He may not have known of John's connections with Jesus at this time.

But how it is that there was some relationship, some friendship or knowledge between these two men, is never explained. And John himself might well have wished to conceal the fact, since Annas was clearly a wicked opponent of Christianity. And yet John is the only one who records the fact that he had this relationship.

Obviously, it was a relationship, perhaps, by family. Some have felt like John may have, in fact, been a Levite. There might have been some family connections to the priesthood.

Some have even argued that John's family were priests and that John and James, the brothers of Ascension's Seventy, were, in fact, priests. However, priests didn't usually operate fishing businesses, as far as I know, but they were occupied in the temple. And so, since Jesus found John and James initially when they were fishing with their father and his business, I don't know that that theory could really hold a lot of water.

But there is some sense, maybe he grew up with his kids or something. Somehow there was an acquaintance between John and the family of the high priest. And it was a positive one.

And so, it says, that disciple, that other one besides Peter, was known to the high priest and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciples, John, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door and brought Peter in.

So, obviously, this courtyard was not a place where the public was invited. Peter did not enter because he had no invitation. There was a doorkeeper there, and Peter was stuck outside.

But John was admitted, obviously, recognized even by the doorkeeper. And then when John looked behind him and saw that Peter was detained outside, he went back, spoke to

the doorkeeper, and allowed Peter to come into the courtyard. And that's where Peter got into trouble.

It says in verse 17, Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you? And he said, I'm not. And the servants and officers who had made a fire of coal stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves, and Peter stood with them and warmed himself. It was as he warmed himself by the fire that he got into further trouble and denied the Lord a couple more times.

That story of that is at this point postponed until verses 25 to 27. But preachers have been fond of making the point that Peter's problem was that he warmed himself at the enemy's fire, and we should not take comfort in the camp of the enemy or whatever. We'll end up denying the Lord.

I've heard that sermon preached on occasions in various places, but frankly, I don't see that it was wrong for Peter to go in. John was in there, too. In fact, John apparently was not there by the fire.

Or maybe he was. We don't know. But the interesting thing is that Peter was approached, and John was not, by this girl saying, Aren't you one of Jesus' disciples? Now, this is either because Peter was a more visible disciple, and John a more retiring or less noticeable disciple of Jesus.

Certainly the enemies of Christ were not acquainted with all of Jesus' disciples because Jesus spent most of his time in Galilee, and they were now, of course, down in Jerusalem, where Jesus spent a limited amount of time. And even while he was down there, he was usually teaching in the temple, and his disciples may have been scattered throughout the crowd, for all we know. So it was not possible for his enemies in Jerusalem to know everything about who his disciples were.

And apparently, either they were not aware that John, too, was one of his disciples, or else they did, and it didn't matter that much. John was not ashamed of being a disciple. He was publicly known by these people as a disciple of Jesus.

And perhaps he knew that it wasn't really all that dangerous at this point to be known as a disciple of Jesus. Peter, not being aware of that lack of danger or feeling himself threatened, denied his discipleship. Again, I'm just presenting two possibilities.

No one knows which is correct. Either this girl and the others around didn't know that John was a disciple of Jesus, although they knew John. And Peter was more visible, and they had recognized him as one.

Or else, they may well have known that both John and Peter were disciples of Jesus, and there really wasn't any attempt on their part at this time to arrest the disciples, since the

leader had been captured. And there was not a concentrated effort to go after his disciples at this point. And Peter was just more paranoid than he needed to be.

John may have not been concerned at all that people knew he was a disciple. But whichever is true, we're left without knowledge. We just have to realize there's a couple of possibilities there.

Now, he denied that he knew the Lord in verse 17. And then after that, he doesn't seem to be overly smitten in conscience. He moves over to the pyre and begins to warm himself, probably trying to look nonchalant so no one will ask him any more questions.

And he wants to overhear what goes on inside. Probably, you know, in a warm climate like that, the buildings had no windows to close. And he could overhear what was going on inside the house as he stood outside the courtyard and warmed himself at the fire.

Now, what was going on in the house is recorded in verses 19 through 24. The high priest, this was Annas, then asked Jesus about his disciples and his doctrine. Now, we're not told exactly what form these questions took.

Who are your disciples? How many of them are there? Give their names and addresses and so forth. He asked something about the disciples and also about Jesus' doctrine. What are you teaching? Now, Jesus decided not to give them any information.

This may have been to protect his disciples from later identification. He was not there to drag his disciples into danger, but rather he was there to avoid them falling into danger, as we know. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he had secured their escape by demanding that his captors identify who they were after.

And when they twice identified themselves as being pursuers of Jesus, he said, well, that's me. You don't want these people. Let them go.

So Jesus clearly showed that though he was intending to die, he did not at all intend for his disciples to get in trouble at this time. Now, Annas wanted to know what it is that Jesus taught, how many disciples he had, and maybe what kind of people were in his band of disciples. Were they zealots? If they were zealots, then he might be able to accuse Jesus before Pilate on that basis, because the zealots, of course, were criminals.

And so, I mean, we don't know the kind of question that took place, but Jesus dodged this particular line of inquiry. Jesus answered him and said, I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet.

And in secret, I've said nothing. Now, to say in secret I've said nothing is not entirely true, and it's a hyperbole. He's not denying the fact that there have been times when he spoke privately to his disciples.

And we know from other Gospels, and even this Gospel, that Jesus did have private conferences with his disciples, which were not public. He spoke to the public in parables, but he explained everything privately to his disciples. But he's not denying that particular point.

What he's trying to say is everything you're asking me has been publicly declared by me at one time or another. I've been very open, I've been transparent, I've said everything in the synagogues, I've said it in the public places. You know, I don't really care to go over it again now.

None of the things you're asking me have been confined to private discussions or secretive meetings on my part. I've been quite blatant in my viewpoints and in all the public places where the Jews continuously meet. He says, why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them.

Indeed, they know what I said. And 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? Of course, Annas wasn't really the high priest legally, but in the Jewish sentiment he was. And Jesus answered him, if I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil.

But if well, why do you strike me? Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest. Now, Jesus, he did speak a little bit flip, you know, to the high priest. He did say, well, you know, why are you asking me about this? Why don't you ask those who have heard me? You're arresting me as a criminal, but you apparently don't have any knowledge of what I've done or said, implying that you're kind of without grounds, it sounds like, for arresting me, since you're not even aware of what I've said.

But the whole world out there knows what I've said. You know less about me, and you're my accuser and my judge, you know less about me than the general public does. And when they slapped him for saying that, he responded.

Now, Paul was in a similar situation once, before the same body, although this high priest had turned over. That is, there was a new high priest at the time that Paul faced the Sanhedrin in Acts chapter 23, and something very similar happened, although Paul's response, a little different than Jesus's, though not necessarily in spirit different. But as Paul in Acts 23, 1, was brought before the Sanhedrin, the same court that had condemned Jesus.

It says, Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the high priest, Ananias, this is a different high priest of a later time, years later, commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, God will strike you, you whitewashed wall, for you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck

contrary to the law? And those who stood by said, Do you revile God's high priest? Then Paul said, Oh, I didn't know, brethren, that he was a high priest, for it is written, You shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people.

Now, Paul called the guy a whitewashed wall because he was a hypocrite. The law said in the Old Testament, You shall do no injustice in judgment. That was a law for the magistrates and the judges.

You're not supposed to do anything unjust in judgment. And here he strikes Paul without warrant. So the high priest was doing something unjust in judgment.

And Paul says, Paul knew the law better probably than the priest did. He was an expert. And he said, You're in violation of the law in the very act of having me struck.

And you're judging me by this law? Basically putting out the man's hypocrisy. But then, as Jesus was, Paul was taken to task for speaking in an unkind way to the high priest. Will you talk that way to the high priest? And Paul surprisingly retracted his statement.

Jesus didn't. Paul said, I didn't know he was a high priest. It is, after all, written, You shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people.

Now, it's strange that Paul retracted his statement, except for this. I mean, there are different interpretations. Some people feel that Paul was being sarcastic.

It's hard to tell, of course, that we just have the words. We don't have his tone of voice or his face and expression recorded for us. But some feel there's sarcasm.

Oh, I didn't know he was a high priest. As if to say, I didn't realize anyone so, of such poor character. And so, such an outlaw could actually be the high priest of God's people.

I didn't know. I hardly recognized him as such, as having high priestly authority. But, and then he quotes the scripture, more or less, to show that he's submitted to scripture.

But, it does seem like Paul certainly must have known who the high priest is. And I mean, I imagine every Jew on the street knew who the high priest was. How could they not? He was one of the leading Jewish officials in their society.

And Paul had previously been attached to the Sanhedrin. And this Ananias, who is now high priest, must have been a lesser priest in the days when Paul was there. He must have known Ananias from the days when Paul himself was attached as sort of a junior deputy to the Sanhedrin before his conversion.

It's possible, but not likely, that Paul had never heard that this man Ananias had been promoted to the high priesthood. Again, it's one of the most visible offices in the entire Jewish community. And that Paul, a rabbi himself, would not know who happened to be the high priest is unthinkable.

When every child in every Jewish home probably could tell you who the high priest was. Some have thought, well, maybe the high priest wasn't in his priestly attire and Paul did have poor eyesight. After all, they say, no one knows if that's true or not, but it's not impossible.

There is that theory. And with Paul's poor eyesight, and since the guy had gotten up in the middle of the night, in Jesus' case, yeah, I guess that's not in Paul's case. We don't know that this was in the middle of the night.

But if the guy was not dressed for the setting and Paul's eyesight was poor and he didn't recognize his voice, he might not have known who it was that had given the order and therefore, oh, I didn't know it was the high priest, so I'll try to retract the statement. That's maybe a possibility. We just don't know.

But I will say this. I think probably Paul is trying to show that I am more in submission to the law than you are. He's just said, you have had me smitten contrary to the law.

They accuse him of speaking inappropriately to the high priest and he retracts it, repents of it as it were, and says, oh, well, I'll take that back because the law says that I should and I'm submitted to the law. The law says you should not revile the rule of your people and I am, after all, a law-abiding Jew unlike yourselves. That would be the implication.

And that's a possible reason why he said that. I do believe there is a fair bit of irony in Paul's tone in that response. Now, Jesus, we don't know that he's being ironic or sarcastic at all in his response.

When he's accused of speaking inappropriately to the high priest, he says, well, if what I said is wrong, then find fault with it. If there's no wrong in what I've said, why do you strike me? Now, some have felt like Jesus should have turned the other cheek. After all, Jesus said, if anyone strikes you on one cheek, you should turn the other cheek.

Well, I don't know that he didn't. He didn't call twelve angels angels, that's for sure, and he could have done that. Of course, when Jesus said to turn the other cheek, I believe, of course, he's speaking generically of a position of non-retaliation.

The literal turning of a cheek might sometimes be the appropriate application of that principle. There might be other times when simply not retaliating is, you know, the conformity to the principle that he taught. He certainly did not retaliate, and there's nothing wrong with a person speaking out against injustice, even if the injustice is against themselves.

Later on, Paul, when he was tied to a whooping post, and the Romans were about to beat him to get a confession out of him, he said, well, is it lawful for you to beat me when I'm a Roman citizen, I'm condemned, and he hadn't had a trial? Well, as a Roman citizen, Paul did have the legal right to a fair trial, and it was one of the things in the Roman law

that a citizen could not be beaten without a trial. And the Romans, up to this point, had not recognized that he was a Roman citizen, and when they found that he was, they decided not to beat him lest they get into trouble with the emperor. And so Paul appealed to justice and to his rights and so forth to, you know, to avoid a beating in that case.

Now, of course, Jesus is not in any sense trying to avoid a beating. In fact, he's intending to take a beating and a crucifixion. But I think what we can say is that while some people would argue that we should never resist evil in any form, after all, Jesus said do not resist the evil man, and that's where he went on to say turn the other cheek and these other things.

I think what Jesus would really say is we shouldn't resist evil in ways that are selfish and unloving. To strike somebody who struck you would be an unloving thing. It's self-vindication and so forth.

But to speak out against injustice, especially to those in political authority who are the ministers of God for enforcement of justice, is simply to act as a conscience to the world, as a conscience to the system. When politicians and others obviously act without conscience, I believe the church or the Christian is put into the world to be a conscience, to speak out against injustice. Now, Paul didn't always speak out injustice against himself.

He and Silas took a beating unjustly in Philippi, and they said nothing about their Roman citizenship. They could have, but they, for some reason, went ahead and took the beating. They may have had a strategy there because the next day when the Philippian magistrates came and said, well, you're free.

He said, I'm not free. And you're not free either because you have beaten me and I'm a Roman citizen and you are not going to get away with this unless you take me out publicly and vindicate me before the eyes of everyone that you've beaten me before. And Paul did that, of course, to vindicate the gospel because the last any of the public had known of Paul and his companions, he'd been treated like a criminal.

Thus, conveying the notion publicly that the gospel is, that to preach the gospel is a criminal thing. And Paul wasn't just going to sneak off secretly and leave that impression. He said, you're going to have to vindicate me.

You have done a wrong. I can take you to court. I can have your badge.

You know, you'll be in big trouble because I am a Roman citizen. You didn't know it and you beat me. And you are in big trouble unless you take me out publicly and vindicate my message in me and then I'll leave town.

And they did. And they were scared when Paul said that because they were in big

trouble. They had acted hastily assuming that Paul was not a Roman citizen.

Most Jews were not. Anyway, there are times when for the gospel's sake or simply for the sake of justice, leaders should be rebuked, but not resisted forcibly. Jesus had the power, but did not use the power to resist the leaders.

But he did rebuke them for their injustice and that's all he did. He said, if I've spoken evil, bear witness of the evil. I mean, if I've done something wrong, tell me what it is.

If what I said is not true, tell me what is untrue about it. If I've spoken well, then it doesn't seem like you should have hit me, does it? You're unjust. Well, having gotten no information of the type that he wanted out of Jesus, Annas then bound Jesus and sent him off to Caiaphas, apparently the same evening.

And so Jesus came to his second trial that night, probably in the chambers of the Sanhedrin. Before we go and read of that, we have verses 25 through 27 here in John 18. Now, Simon Peter stood and warmed himself.

Therefore, that's how we left him in verse 18, warming himself. Therefore they said to him, someone did, you are not also one of his disciples, are you? And he denied it and said, I'm not. One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off, who may have been there in the garden apparently, said, did I not see you in the garden with him? Peter didn't exactly take an obscure role in the garden.

He's the one who'd leap forward with the sword and start hacking away. I mean, to avoid recognition, this would not have been the right way to go about it. I mean, he was drawing attention to himself and Malchus's own relative had been present and said, hey, I think I recognize you.

And Peter, of course, was really under the gun in that case. How could he deny it? However, Peter did deny it. The other gospels tell us that he even on this occasion swore and said, I swear I don't know him.

So I mean, he perjured himself as well as denying the Lord. Now, John doesn't mention this, but in Luke and the other gospels, it mentions that the cock crowed at that moment, the third time Peter denied the Lord, the cock crowed. And the other gospels tell us that Peter then remembered Jesus' prediction that before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.

And he realized it had come true and he went out and wept bitterly. Luke adds one little other detail that no other gospel does. In Luke 22, 61, Luke 22, 61 tells us that at the moment the cock crowed, Jesus looked over at Peter.

And then Peter remembered what Jesus said. That makes it all the more poignant because Jesus, of course, had not been listening in on Peter's conversations. Jesus was

occupied elsewhere getting beat up and stuff.

And of course, when... But Jesus would have heard the cock crow. And Jesus would have remembered that he'd made the prediction. And therefore, though he had not been in the presence of Peter and probably did not overhear Peter's denials, he knew that when he heard the cock crow, Peter had done those things.

And when he looked over out the window probably at Peter, or maybe he was in an outdoor theater of some kind, he could look over and see Peter. When they made eye contact, Peter knew that Jesus knew. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Now, we have to realize that what Peter did was deny Jesus. Now, Jesus had said in the presence of the disciples back in the 10th chapter of Matthew, whoever confesses me before men, I will confess before my Father which is in heaven. And whoever denies me before men, I will deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Now, there can hardly be any fate worse than for a person to be ushered into the judgment seat of Christ on the last day knowing that everything they have ever done is going to be taken into account and that from that place, they are going to go eternally into the flames of hell or eternally into bliss and happiness and ultimate joy and fulfillment knowing that these are the two destinies. There can hardly be anything more terrible than that the only hope you have of heaven which is that Jesus will own you and Jesus will say, He's mine. That Jesus already told you you're not going to have that.

You deny me before men, I will deny you before my Father. And without Jesus' acknowledgement, there's no way in. So, Peter really stood damned by Jesus' own words.

At this time. There can be no doubt that he was a sincere disciple before this, but by Jesus' own words, Peter was damned. He would be denied before the Father for what he had done.

However, at a later time, in fact, one of the very latest times recorded in the Gospels, in John chapter 21, when Peter and others were at the Lake of Galilee fishing and Jesus appeared by the lakeside and Peter jumped in the water and swam to him. And Peter and Jesus and the others were having breakfast by the fire. Jesus three times said to Peter, Do you love me? Do you love me more than these? And do you love me? And Peter was fairly ashamed at being asked since he knew that had he really loved Jesus as he should, he would never have denied him and that was still on his conscience.

But each time, Peter could not deny that he loved the Lord because he really did at a certain level. And he said, Yes, I love you. You know all things.

You know that I love you. And each time that Peter said that, Jesus said, Feed my sheep or feed my lamb. Which it is never stated in Scripture exactly why it was that Jesus asked him this question three times.

However, the fact that it was one of the first times, not the very first, but one of the first times after the resurrection and therefore after this denial, that Jesus got to talk to Peter along these lines. And since the denials had been threefold, many feel that Jesus' threefold questioning of him and commissioning of him to feed the sheep was Jesus' way of addressing this situation of his previous denials and offering him not only forgiveness but restoration to his position of leadership, which he had previously had either by commission or by implication. So when he said, Feed my sheep, that made him a shepherd.

Not only a believer, not only forgiven and saved, but also a church leader again. And so we see the restoring mercy of Jesus, that when Jesus himself heard the cock crow, it must have made his heart sink to know that Peter had by this time, Peter, his most adamant supporter, had by this time already denied him three times. And yet on one of the earliest occasions possible, Jesus talked with him about this and recommissioned him.

Now why did Jesus forgive him? If Jesus said, He that denies me before men I will deny before my father. Was Jesus kind of being wishy-washy about this and said, Ah well, boys will be boys, you know, we'll just forget it. No, it's because Peter went out and wept bitterly.

We are to understand that he repented of this. And it's interesting too, you know, because the gospels do record this. There could hardly be anything more shameful in the history of any individual Christian, to say nothing of a major church leader, than to report that he, out of fear of man, had wimped out, you know, and denied the Lord and done that which is the ultimate betrayal of Christianity and of Christ.

To record that, as he does, is, you know, shows the tremendous humility of Peter and of the apostles to record it. Peter himself, whose testimony stands behind the book of Mark, must have preached about his own denial because Mark includes it. And so, anyway, we find Peter truly repentant.

Of course, the contrast between Peter's wimpiness in this story and his boldness in Acts chapter 2 and forever afterwards. Well, not forever afterwards. He got a little wimpy also when he came to Antioch according to Galatians 2. But for the most part, he was bold and courageous in later stories about him.

I think the difference has been attributed to a couple of different things. Charismatics, like myself, tend to see it as a difference made by the baptism of the Holy Spirit because Peter was this way before he was baptized in the Spirit. And then after he was baptized in the Spirit on Pentecost, he was bold and outspoken for the Lord, even to the same audience, I mean, to these same people.

He threw it in their faces. You have crucified Christ and he didn't care who knew it. And

he was a disciple.

So he was very different after he was baptized in the Spirit. Those who are not charismatics, and maybe even some charismatics, would say it wasn't so much the baptism of the Spirit as another phenomenon that occurred, and that was the resurrection of Christ, that Jesus had risen from the dead. Of course, it was obviously an encouraging and strengthening factor in probably all the disciples' boldness, knowing that Jesus had, in fact, risen from the dead and death held no terrors to the believer.

And that being so, he didn't have to fear death and he could boldly proclaim what he knew. Anyway, that brings us to the end of our treatment of John's Gospel at this point. We need to go now to Matthew 26.

It is at this place that we will read of the trial that Jesus had to stand before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin that night. This is also recorded in Mark, but not in Luke or John. So Matthew and Mark both record this particular incident in Mark 14 and in Matthew 26.

We'll read it in Matthew. Matthew 26, verses 57 through 68. And those who had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest.

That was what we last read about it in John 18.24. It says that Annas had him bound and led him off to Caiaphas. So here we have him bound and taken away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and elders were assembled. We are to assume that this was at least a quorum, or probably a quorum, perhaps only the meeting the next morning had a quorum, of the Sanhedrin.

It doesn't say the whole council had gathered. And we can be fairly sure that certain members of the council, like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both of them secret believers in Christ, that they were either, and maybe not so secret, that they either were not invited, just incidentally, because only a few of the Sanhedrin members had come to this evening meeting, or that they were deliberately excluded because of their sentiments, which their companions knew that they might be favorable toward Jesus and wouldn't approve of what was going to go on. In any case, there were some sympathizers with Jesus that belonged to the court, probably not very many, but we know that Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel, a major principal member, and Joseph of Arimathea and who knows who else were there.

Now, Gamaliel was also on the council. I seriously doubt if he was at this meeting, because in Acts, Gamaliel shows tremendous tolerance of the Jesus movement. Gamaliel says, if this movement is of God, we don't want to fight against God, and if it's not of God, it will fizzle out.

Let's not worry about these men. Of course, Gamaliel was making the statement about the disciples, not about Jesus, but showing that kind of even-handedness, as he did, and

open-mindedness. It seems unlikely that Gamaliel was present at this, although we have no evidence from Scripture whether he was or wasn't.

It was a nighttime gathering. Now, the Jewish law itself, not the law of Moses, but the rabbinic laws, the rabbinic traditions, forbade a number of the things that the Jews did in the course of condemning Jesus. Somebody has written a book called *The Illegal Trial of Jesus*.

I haven't read it, but I understand that they document a whole bunch, I think about 19 different rabbinic laws that were violated by the Sanhedrin in the trial of Jesus. I don't even remember what they all are. I can remember some of them.

But one of them was that it was against the law to have a trial at night. It was against the law of the Jews to have a trial at night, possibly because it's harder to get the whole council together at night and they should have a better representation, the best possible representation of the council to make a decision. And of course, since this was, by this time, fairly late at night, no doubt, it's possible that the majority of the Sanhedrin were at home in bed and that Caiaphas had gathered some of the elders and the chief priests whom he knew to be very much his yes-men and very much would go along with him on this, no doubt a quorum, or if not a quorum, maybe just a committee for initial findings, because they did condemn him again separately the next morning at dawn, which would have been a legal convening of the council.

So this evening, it was Caiaphas and some of the elders and the chief priests and no doubt enough of the major leaders of the Sanhedrin to count for something. But it was not a legal trial because it was at night and therefore they met again after dawn and that second meeting may have had a larger representation, at least a quorum, of the Sanhedrin so that they could make it legal. Anyway, it says they were taken 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 this tells about Peter's denial a little later here. It's kind of out of chronological place or else John has put it out of chronological place.

One gets the impression from John that it was in the courtyard of Annas that this took place whereas you get the impression from Matthew that it was in the courtyard of Caiaphas. But as far as impressions go, it's always possible and it's frequently the case that some of the Gospels record stories in different chronological order. In fact, various Gospels talk about the denials of Peter in different places.

They kind of insert it in different places. Somewhere during the night he denied the Lord three times but this is where Matthew talks about that. And then verse 59, Now the chief priests, the elders and the council, all the council, now that could be all the council that was gathered because I seriously doubt that Nicodemus was present.

Though it's hard to say. Maybe he and the other supporters of Jesus were just so outnumbered that they were in discord with the rest of the council but they were shouted down or intimidated or whatever. It's hard to say.

But there was some kind of a significant gathering of the council. They sought false testimony against Jesus to put him to death but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none.

Now where it says they found none, I mean it sounds strange because it says many false witnesses came forward but they found none. That sounds contradictory. But what it means that they found none means they couldn't find two that agreed.

According to the law of the Jews, a person could not be put to death on the testimony of one. The testimony of two or three witnesses was required to confirm every word. And it specifically says in Mark's Parallel, in Mark 14.56, in Mark 14.56, after it tells us that many false witnesses came forward, it says, but their testimonies did not agree.

That's what Mark tells us. So they found none means their testimonies didn't agree. They couldn't find two to agree with each other.

The assumption must be that these witnesses were kept outside and not able to hear what each other had said since there were plenty of false witnesses that were antagonistic to Jesus. In fact, the Sanhedrists may have chosen their friends to become his witnesses but these witnesses are all called false witnesses. All of them were people willing to lie but they were not permitted to talk to each other in advance so they didn't know what lies some other guy had said so they made up their own lies and none of them coincided well enough to look like a legal agreement against Jesus.

So that was fruitless as far as the Sanhedrin was concerned. They couldn't get any mileage out of these guys. But it says, at last, two false witnesses came forward and said, this fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.

Now, Mark says, in Mark 14.59, about these two witnesses that said this, it says, but not even then did their testimonies agree. Okay? They both said something similar to each other but it wasn't close enough. I mean, this is as close as it got.

You know, all the other witnesses must have been really far afield of each other as far as what they claimed Jesus did or said but here came two witnesses that said something very close. They both said something about Jesus having said something about destroying the temple and rebuilding it in three days. Now, Mark tells us, though, as I said in Mark 14.59, that even they didn't agree apparently on every point.

In fact, we can probably see the exact points on which they did not agree by comparing Mark's version of their testimony and Matthew's version of their testimony because Matthew records what they said differently than Mark does. And probably, Matthew

records what one of them said and Mark what they all said and obviously, they don't agree exactly. They're close but they don't agree.

For example, here it says that their testimony against Jesus was this fellow said, verse 61, I am able to destroy the temple of God and build it in three days. Now, that hardly seems something to condemn a man for to say he's able to do something. Now, the other witness apparently said, according to Mark 14.58, we heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands and within three days build another made without hands.

Now, in that testimony recorded by Mark, Jesus didn't just say he was able to do it but he said he would do it. I will destroy this temple made with hands. However, the business about being made with hands or made without hands was obscure.

You know, what is a temple made without hands? After all, does that mean he's going to rebuild the same temple but not use hands to do it or is he talking about a different kind of temple? The particular statement, even if Jesus had made it, is hardly clear as to what he's claiming to do. So, on the one hand, one witness said that Jesus claimed to be able to do this. The other witness said that Jesus said he was going to do it but they didn't fully agree about what it was that he said he was going to do.

Now, probably the reason that these two witnesses agreed so much with each other in contrast to all the other witnesses who had come forward before is that their testimony did resemble something that Jesus had said but not close enough. They were still false witnesses. They twisted his words.

He never said a word about himself destroying the temple and that's what both of them claimed he was talking about. I'm able to do it. I will do it.

Destroy this temple. Jesus never said a word about that. The statement they're referring to must be back in chapter 2 of John where when asked for, you know, credentials and for a sign, he said, well, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again.

Destroy this temple, he said. He challenged them to do it. He didn't say he was going to do it or even that he could do it.

He just said, you destroy this temple and in three days I'll raise it up again. And we're told by John that, of course, this wasn't even about the temple in Jerusalem. This was about his own body.

He was making reference to his own death and resurrection. They, in fact, would destroy his body but he would raise it up again. So, it's clear that Jesus' statement along those lines stood behind as the basic core of what these people were saying but they had twisted it.

They accused him of threatening to destroy the temple, none of which was true and therefore they were false witnesses. Since they both twisted what he said and didn't say it quite right, their witnesses didn't end up agreeing with each other. Each had its own particular slant.

It's interesting, though, that in Mark, he is represented as having said, I'll destroy this temple made with hands and within three days build another made without hands. The reason that's interesting is because it's so true to the fact. Even though Jesus is not recorded anywhere as having said that, that witness, either by coincidence or by coincidence