

Return from False Witness

Caiaphas and the Council
Matthew 26:57–68

OPENING

Each lesson will begin with a reading of Joel 2:13 and a prayer specific to the theme of the study for that week, keeping with the theme, “Return to the Lord.”

Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. (Joel 2:13)

Prayer: Precious Saviour, as You endured that mockery of a trial, with slander and conjecture and false accusations being thrown at You as You were struck and spat upon, You have shown us how to turn the other cheek. Help us learn to do the same when others revile us and say all kinds of false things about us, that our own words and actions may not be in vengeance toward others but may show others the love that You have for all of us through patience and forgiveness and mercy. In Your holy name we pray. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

Blasphemy . . . just one of the things the chief priests and teachers of the law were trying to catch Jesus doing that they may put Him to death. Blasphemy is words or actions that show disrespect for God. Sometimes people can become so blinded with hatred, as did the religious leaders in Jerusalem toward Jesus, that it is effortless to break the Eighth Commandment. Then as they attempt to justify their words and actions, they often magnify the blasphemy, resulting in serious damage or complete ruin of another’s reputation. This is part of the scene of Jesus’ “trial” before Caiaphas, the high priest, and other temple leaders.

QUESTIONS

1. What charges are the chief priests seeking to levy against Jesus (Matthew 26:59)?
2. Of the false witnesses whose words are recorded in Scripture, two gave testimony against Jesus. What did they say? Read Matthew 26:61.

3. The high priest stood and asked Jesus for a response. How does Jesus fulfill what was written about Him? Read Isaiah 53:7.

4. This connects well to the question that Jesus had asked His disciples earlier and the confession that Peter had given. What was that answer? Read Matthew 16:16.

5. How does Jesus answer the high priest's question? What is ironic about Caiaphas's inquiry?

CONCLUSION

It is jarring to us that the sinless Son of God is being tried for crimes He did not commit. What great lengths people will go to when they want to wrongfully convict someone in the court of public opinion! Jesus' life and ministry were without sin, but He is falsely accused of the sin of blasphemy, and a sentence of death is called for by the people.

CLOSING:

The Eighth Commandment

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way. (Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (p. 110). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.)

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, it is with great sorrow that we look upon Your sham of a trial and hear the false witnessing against You who were without sin. Help us when we are haunted by false testimony against us, and remind us what You endured for our sake. Give to us strength, courage, and faith when our enemies say all kinds of false things against us on account of You, knowing that we are blessed by You, who truly are the Christ, the Son of the living God. By the power of Your Holy Spirit, may we confess this always, but with faith and love, firmly believing and holding on to this saving faith in You, even unto death. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.