

The Arrest, Conviction, and Sentencing of God

Matthew 26:47-50, 57-68

At first glance:

- Jesus is betrayed by a close friend (“one of the twelve” [v47] is “the betrayer” [v48]).
- Jesus, only one man, is seized a “great crowd with swords and clubs” [v47].
- Jesus is completely alone in His mock trial [v56, v58].
- The “whole council” sought testimony, even a false accusation [v59], against Jesus, but none could be found [v60].
- The accusation finally laid on Jesus, which brought about the wrath of the court, was against His true testimony about Himself. Caiaphas said, “Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God” [v63], and Jesus replied, “You have said so...” [v64].
- There is deep irony here that these corrupt and treacherous men are those who sit in “judgment” [v66] of Jesus Christ, and greater irony still that they overtly degrade Him [v67] and taunt Him [v68].

The one to whom Jesus offered deep and lasting friendship rejected and betrayed Him.

“47 ...**Judas came, one of the twelve** (one of Jesus’ primary disciples, one of those who had traveled with Jesus and seen His miracles, one who had tasted of the multiplied bread and enjoyed the benefit of intimate teaching and instruction from the mouth of the Lord), **and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.** 48 **Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss** (*philēsō* – to kiss or to love; the one to whom I display this significant sign of brotherly affection) **is the man; seize him.”** 49 **And he came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed him** (*katephilēsen* – to kiss fervently or with love/affection; Judas approached Jesus with the appearance of more than the gesture of an acquaintance. Judas gave a gesture of intimacy; he approached Jesus with the appearance of a loving and genuine friend.).

Despite the flagrant appearance of love, Jesus declares Judas to be an imposter.

50 Jesus said to him, “**Friend** (Jesus calls him friend, but uses a term that means imposter - *hetairos*), do what you came to do.” Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.”

- Matthew uses this same word, translated here as friend, in two other places in his Gospel – chapters 20 and 22.
 - Matthew 20:1-15 – THE VINEYARD: Jesus told a parable or story about a man who owns a vineyard. He hires several laborers throughout a single day, each agrees to be paid the same amount. At the end of the day, each man comes to collect his wage, and those who were hired earlier in the day complained about the fairness of the wage. They said, “*These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat*” [v12]. But the owner of the vineyard replied to one of them, “**Friend**, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity” [vs13-15]?
 - Matthew 22:1-13 – THE WEDDING FEAST: Jesus told another parable or story about a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. The king sent servants to call those who were invited, but they refused to come. The king sent other servants to persuade the invited guests, and they reacted with varying levels of indifference, irritation, anger, and malice. When the king heard how the invited guests had treated his servants, his righteous anger burned and he sent troops to destroy the invited guests and their city. After that, the king offered an open invitation to any and all that would respond to his call. “*But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. 12 And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’*” [vs11-13].

Jesus’ Arrest is loaded with irony and tragedy, but Jesus remains in full control.

Those who were supposed to be the pillars of righteousness and Godly pursuit were the most corrupt and self-seeking.

“57 Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the **high priest** (this is the one priest who is commissioned/allowed to enter the holy of holies only once a year to offer sacrifice on behalf of the people, and he is the presiding leader of the supreme council of priests and elders), **where the scribes** (learned men of the Old Testament – particularly the law of God, but also of the ‘traditions of their fathers’ [see Gal. 1:14]) **and the elders** (mature men with seasoned judgment and members of the Sanhedrin, which is the council or body of elders) **had gathered.** 58 **And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end.** 59 **Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death,** 60 **but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward.** “

Jesus is convicted of claiming to be what and who He actually is.

“At last two came forward 61 and said, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days (This too is a false witness’s accusation, for Jesus never said that He would destroy the temple building or rebuild it [see John 2:18-22]).” 62 **And the high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?”** 63 **But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God** (What a moment this must have been! Imagine seeing this scene from the perspective of eternity... Imagine seeing the Lord Jesus Christ in His full glory, standing toe-to-toe with this corrupt and scandalous mortal, hearing the indignant shouts and His own glorious name invoked as though the idolatrous man could wield such authority as He enjoys without effort! In answer to such as this, one might expect a thunderous voice joined by an all-consuming fire.)” 64 **Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”** (Jesus’ declaration here may be obscure to us, but He was crystal clear to His original hearers.. Notice how they respond.) 65 **Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy.** “

- What did Jesus say that infuriated them so? He told them they would see the “Son of Man” at the “right hand of Power,” and these were familiar images to them.
 - Daniel 7:13-14 – Daniel says, “I saw in the night visions, and behold, **with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man**, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And **to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom**, that all peoples, nations, and

languages should serve him; **his dominion is an everlasting dominion**, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”

The high priest, the scribes, and the elders sentence Jesus to death, degrading Him and taunting Him as they do it.

“66 ‘What is **your judgment** (once again we are reminded that these dishonest men sit in judgment of Jesus Christ)?’ **They answered, ‘He deserves death’** (What has He done that ‘deserves’ death? He has no sin, and no one was able to offer a single accusation against Him – even though there was ample desire to find an accuser). 67 **Then they spit in his face** (One of the lowest and most degrading gestures that one can make is to spit in the face of another. The Lord God incarnate, who made the man who found in his mouth spittle which he gathered and thrust from his lips, was the object of this man’s malicious scorn.) **and struck him** (Notice here too the ironic posturing of power! These men exhibit false force and sterile strength, striking and making sport of Jesus Christ. Christ is the God of the universe, the One who possesses power beyond measure and strength unimaginable).”

And some slapped him, 68 saying, ‘Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?’”

Our tendency, in hearing of this historical account, is to think “Oh, how terrible those men were!”

Yet, we may find it more productive to think “Oh my, how I am just like those men! God help me!”

- How are we like these men?
 - Some are like Judas – fair weather friends
 - Some are like Caiaphas – self-righteousness and arrogant
 - Some are like the scribes – full of knowledge and yet lacking in wisdom
 - Some are like the elders – lording power over those beneath them
 - Some are like the disciples – running away in fear of the opposition

All of us are in need of God’s grace in Christ Jesus, for He has borne the sin and penalty of all who trust in Him. We all will find faults within and failures without, but Christ is the better Friend, High Priest, Wise Counselor, Merciful Lord, and Strong Tower under which we may find shelter from the storm.

John 18:8 – “Jesus answered, ‘I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go.’”

Spurgeon’s Mornings & Evenings – March 26, Morning, John 18:8