



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 18:12-14 and 19-24

“Christ Before Annas”

TRANSCRIPT

[Audio begins] Let's turn to John chapter 18 and I want to read verse 12 through verse 14 and then verse 19 through verse 24. John chapter 18 verse 12 through verse 14. Remember our Lord has finished his upper room discourse, he has prayed his high priestly prayer. He and the disciples have gone down to the Garden of Gethsemane. There the Lord Jesus has prayed, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will but Thine be done.” And then as they were making their way out the Roman soldiers, with also the temple police, have come and they have taken him and arrested him. And we read in verse 12,

“Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, and led him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.”

Now we don't ordinarily do this, but there's a reason for it, as you can tell, when you read through this chapter that John is really following two subjects here. He's following the trial of our Lord before Annas and Caiaphas, but he also is detailing and describing Peter's experience of denial.

So in verse 15 through verse 18 we have a section that has to do with Peter’s denial, which is later taken up again and so since we’re not going to consider that, we’ll go on to verse 19 where we read,

“The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them. (Now I’d like to stop for just a moment and point out that this word “me” bears a great deal of emphasis in the original text, you might not know it from reading the English text, but the chances are you would sense that just by the contrasting thoughts.) Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? (and again there’s a little stress on that “so” that is, in this manner) Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.”

One reading that in the Authorized Version may gain the impression that he was before Caiaphas at this time, because of the little word “had” which makes pluperfect this verb instead of a simple past. Now it’s true that in the original text it could be rendered “had sent him” or simply “sent him.” Now if we should read this “had sent him” he is before Caiaphas, but if we read it simply “sent him” then of course he will be going from Annas to Caiaphas. The point’s a very minor point, and I only mention it simply because in the exposition that follows I may make a statement which might not be understood so well by you if you have a text that says “had” or if you have one that has simply “sent him.” Probably the latter is correct, so that at this point he is sent from the presence of Annas, Caiaphas may have been there too, to Caiaphas for a more significant meeting. We’ll say something about that later on.

May the Lord bless this reading of his Word. Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] We thank Thee Lord for this privilege that is ours today together in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to open the Scriptures, the inspired word of God, and in a sense be present again ourselves at the trial of our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee Lord for the marvelous providence which Thou hast manifested in the life and ministry of the Son of God, so that at every step of the way the experiences and the words of the Lord Jesus speak volumes to us. As we think of the magnificent claims that the Lord Jesus has made, that he is the Messiah, that he is the Son of man who lays down his life for our sins, that he did not come to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for our sins. When we reflect Lord upon these magnificent affirmations and claims from the vantage point of the completion of them we are indeed grateful that the work has been perfectly accomplished and now the Son of God, Messiah, and King of Israel sits at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high, offering the full and free forgiveness of sins to those who flee to him.

And we are grateful Lord for the fact that Thou hast brought us to the knowledge of him, which means eternal life. A righteousness has been given to us that is satisfying to our holy triune God. And we have also been given the assurance that in him our future is settled forevermore. Lord, as we have just sung in that hymn, we give Thee praise. We give Thee thanks. We are grateful for all that has transpired for our benefit through the saving work of Christ. And Lord, if there should be someone in this audience who has not yet within their inmost being given Thee thanks for him who has loved us and loosed us from our sins, O may they do that now.

We pray Lord for the whole church of Jesus Christ. No matter where they may be today on the face of this globe, continue Lord the work of edification and may we all finally reach the status of the perfect man, the mature church of Jesus Christ. In the meantime Lord, use the church for the accomplishment of Thy purposes.

We pray Lord for all who are in the body are suffering, or who have difficulties and trials, some who are bereaved. We particularly pray Lord that Thou wilt sustain them and encourage them,

build them up, give them the sense of Thy presence and strength and enablement in the midst of their trials. And for those of us Lord who have the problems, the everyday problems of life, we commit them to Thee. We thank Thee for the assurance that the God of heaven is working in our behalf.

We pray for this church, for its elders, and for its deacons, and for its members, and for its friends, and for the visitors who are here today, O God, minister to them through the word of God. We pray for our country. We know Lord the critical time in which we are living, and we pray that the decisions that are made in Washington may be decisions that are for the ultimate good of this people, and especially for the progress of the gospel. Now Lord as we sing a hymn of praise to Thee, and as we listen to the word of God, may each of us profit from it. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Well it is nice to have an accomplished song leader like Mark McCracken. Mark and I as, of course you know from looking at us, we go back a few years, [Laughter] but our relationship goes back a few years too. When I first came to Dallas Mark was one of the best-known soloists among the men in evangelical churches in Dallas, beautiful voice, still has a good voice of course, he doesn't sing and demonstrate it to us as a soloist, but that is one of the ways in which I remember Mark, and appreciate so much his contribution to us here, which is very significant particularly in times like this when we need some help.

There was a third thing that might happen to a preacher, which out of courtesy to me he did not mention, and the third thing was, beside losing your notes, and losing your voice, the third thing was losing your mind. [Laughter] And since I'm very close to that, he very nicely did not mention that. So Mark, if you're still listening, he was here at 8:30 too he may have be on his way out, but if you're still listening, I appreciate your not mentioning that. [Laughter]

The subject for today is “Christ Before Annas” and we're looking at John chapter 18 verse 12 through verse 14 and then verse 19 through verse 24. One of the very significant things about John's account of the ministry of the Lord Jesus is the marvelous way in which he draws out the

irony of the situation in which our Lord finds himself as man. For example, in the Scriptures it is made very plain that the Lord Jesus is the judge of this universe. All judgment has been committed into the hands of the Son of God by the Father. Way back in the 5th chapter in the Gospel of John the Lord Jesus had said, “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” Later after this, and after this incident that is before us, the Apostle Paul preaching in the Book of Acts in Athens, is said as he concludes his message there, to have said that God has appointed a day in which he is going to judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained whereof he has given assurance in that he has raised him from the dead.

So the Lord Jesus has had all judgment committed into his hand. He is the ultimate judge before whom all men shall appear. Christians shall appear before him in the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, not with reference to the forgiveness of their sins, but with reference to their service. And then all non-Christians shall ultimately appear before the Lord Jesus Christ as the ultimate judge of men. What is so ironic about the ministry as John presents it is, here the Judge of all is before the human judges. The irony of it is excruciating. One cannot help but reflect upon this as we go through this passion account, and how wonderful it is that we do not receive the same kind of judgment that he received. In fact, the Psalmist puts it this way, speaking of God’s dealings with us, “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, he has not rewarded us according to our iniquities.” By our sins and by our iniquities we deserve eternal punishment, but by the grace of God, and the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, we receive as a free gift, a righteousness that avails before the triune God of heaven.

Yesterday I was reading one of my favorite magazines, because I do think it’s high quality, commentary magazine. It’s a Jewish periodical. It’s remarkable, ten years ago it was a rather liberal magazine, because of the events in the world, it has become strikingly conservative in many of its articles. There was an article by a man in a recent issue who had been one of the interrogators of Adolf Eichmann, the Jew-slayer in Germany. The author went on to describe the interrogation of Eichmann and how when he was in prison in Israel he was treated, how day after day he came in to

talk to him. And then at the conclusion of the article he made the point that Adolf Eichmann did not receive in Israel the kind of judgment that he meted out to the Jewish people, and others, during the days of Hitler. Well it is a wonderful thing to realize that we do not receive the kind of judgment that the Lord Jesus received at the hands of men.

Now as we approach the account in the Johannine Gospel, in which we are to read and picture in our minds the trial of the Lord Jesus, we need to keep several things separate in our minds. The Lord Jesus had two kinds of trial. That is, he had an ecclesiastical trial, and then his trial was also civil. So there were two aspects to it, ecclesiastical and civil. He was judged before the authorities of Israel, and then he was judged before the Roman authorities. Now when he was judged before the authorities in Israel he appeared before the high priest and the council. There actually were three separate appearances of our Lord, just as there were three separate appearances before the civil authorities. So if we can keep in our minds his ecclesiastical trial on the one hand, his civil trial on the other, and remember that there're three points under each, then we will have it, I think, fairly clear in our minds, so that when we read we'll be able to read with more comprehension.

But the Lord Jesus appeared first of all before Annas. It was a preliminary inquiry. And then secondly, in an illegal midnight appearance before Caiaphas who was serving as high priest that year. And then finally, he appeared in a formal session, in a morning meeting, which confirmed the verdict of these informal meetings. One thing prevented the Sanhedrin from carrying out its will. They wished to put him to death. They had wanted to put him to death before this. The thing that gave them the opportunity was when Judas came and desired to betray him. They had said, “We want to put him to death, but we don't want to do it because we fear what the people will do.” But when Judas came and offered to betray him, that in effect gave them the opening that they desired and so they intended to carry out what they wanted to carry out. But the Sanhedrin was prevented, by the Roman law, from putting anyone to death. And so while they might condemn him, and condemn him as worthy of death, they could not actually put him to death. The charge that they brought against the Lord Jesus was a religious charge of blasphemy. The Romans would never have

accepted blasphemy as reason for death. And so it was necessary for them to involve the Romans, and also for the charge to be changed.

So he was condemned for blasphemy before the Sanhedrin, and finally he confesses of course, that he is the Son of God, the Messiah, and Caiaphas later on will rend his garments in token of the fact that the charge of blasphemy is justified. But when he goes before the civil authorities, the charge there must be something different. And so the charge that is brought by the Jewish people to the attention of the Romans is the charge of treason. He is said to have taught that there is another king besides Caesar. And of course, in the spiritual sense, our Lord did teach that, no question about it. So he is charged before Pilate with treason. Now Pilate tries him of course. And Pilate finds that there's no cause for putting our Lord to death, and so when he hears that Herod happens to be in the vicinity, he sends him to Herod, hoping that Herod will settle the matter and he will be able to move from the fence. But Herod, while he wanted to talk to our Lord, and he asked him questions, the Lord wouldn't even say anything to Herod, because Herod already had sufficient knowledge.

You know that illustrates the fact that there is a time when God no longer speaks to us. He no longer speaks to us when he's already given his message to us and we have over and over again rejected that message. The Scriptures teach that there is a time when divine retribution is the action that God carries out. We humans do not know of course, when that point is reached, we simply know there is such a point as that. So our Lord answered Herod nothing. And Herod sent him back to Pilate. So in the civil trial he was before Pilate, and then before Herod, and then before Pilate again, and the charge there was treason. The Romans were enlightened conquerors to that extent, and they would not allow the charge of blasphemy to be met by death. And if possible they allowed the nations that they conquered to live according to their customs and usages, but in this case our Lord had to be condemned by the civil authorities before he could be put to death.

But what is also ironic about this, is that he appears before the judges, both of the ecclesiastical court and of the civil court, and in the final analysis there is no judge, no high authority,

in human life who does not receive the authority from the Lord God. And so he who gives authority to man now stands before the bar of the authority that he himself has given. I say the irony is excruciating, and we do not understand these sections of the gospels if we do not appreciate what we have here. That’s the reason incidentally, in my opinion, that the gospel writers spend so much time on the passion of our Lord. They too were impressed by the irony of all of these situations that developed as Jesus went on his way to the cross.

Well after he is taken prisoner, in the garden by the temple police, supported by Roman police as well, Roman soldiers, a cohort of them evidently, we read from one of the gospel records, the Lord Jesus is taken to Annas. The high priest was the ecclesiastical head of the nation. He was the administrative head of the nation. He was the political head of the nation, and he was the judicial head of the state. So the high priest was a very important man. Ordinarily the priests came from the tribe of Aaron, the tribe of Levi, and the high priest came from the family of Aaron. But in the time of the Romans, the Romans appointed the high priest. Now in other words, the final authority for the particular priest who would serve rested with the Romans. That incidentally, should have been an indication to Israel that something has happened in their history. They do not now have the authority that God gave them to have the high priest selected according to the principles and laws set down in the Old Testament.

If for example, a group of Israelites had reflected upon that with open mind, they would perhaps have come to the conclusion, “Evidently something is wrong with our nation, because we are not in a situation in which we can carry out the law that God gave us from Moses.” So that would have given them a clue that something was wrong. And of course, something was wrong, they were a hewn down tree now because of their apostasy from the Lord God and the teaching of the Old Testament. That incidentally, should be cause for reflection by Israel today. They are back in the land, but they do not have the prized place in the city of Jerusalem, for the Mohammedan mosque rests and it is there and there alone, by the Old Testament Scriptures that the sacrifices taught in the Old Testament are to be offered. And so there is no legal place for the offering of



sacrifices today. If we are to say, “We live under the Law of Moses” and we are carry out the Law of Moses, there is, in the providence of God, an impossible situation that faces them. They cannot do it. That should ask them, that should cause them to search the Old Testament to see if perhaps there is some accounting for the fact that by divine providence they cannot keep the Law of Moses. And perhaps it might come home that the disciplinary actions that Moses speaks about in passages like Deuteronomy 28 and following, and Leviticus 26, explain the present situation of the nation Israel.

Well now, the Lord Jesus is before the Annas, and the priestly crowd, and it’s all been prejudged. They’ve already said they want to put him to death, but the circumstances are not yet favorable for that.

Let me say a word about the character of Annas and Caiaphas, because these two play an important part in the last days of our Lord. In the case of Annas, the was the father-in-law of Caiaphas. He was a cool, cunning, behind the scenes leader, who was irritated at the Lord Jesus for two things. He was irritated at the Lord because of the temple matter in which the Lord had taken the scourge of small cords, and with that whip had driven out the money changers from the temple, for they were in charge of those things, they did not like that.

And then secondly, remember that the Sadducees ordinarily were the priestly company. The Pharisees were the scribe and the students of the Old Testament law, speaking very generally. The Pharisees and the Sadducees differed over biblical doctrine. The Sadducees for example, did not believe in angels or spirits, and they did not believe in the resurrection of the body. On the other hand, the Pharisees did. And so Annas and Caiaphas would have had a second thing, a second difficulty with our Lord, and that second difficulty with our Lord was the resurrection of Lazarus. And though they may have denied that such had taken place, still it was claimed by our Lord and his followers, that Lazarus had been raised from the dead. And if it were true, it struck at one of the principle doctrinal planks of the Sadducees, who did not accept the existence of angels or spirits and the resurrection. So you can understand why Annas was disturbed by Jesus, aside from the fact of his own sin.

In fact, Annas' name is an interesting name. It comes from the Hebrew word *hanan* which means “to be gracious.” So Mr. Graciousness, Mr. Grace of God, is something like his name, or at least that would be something that one would think about when he thought of his name. What makes that supremely ironical is that he probably, humanly speaking, thought, as our Lord said would happen, that he was doing God a favor in judging Jesus of Nazareth. The Lord Jesus had said just shortly before this in the upper room discourse, when speaking to the apostles. He said, “They will put you out of the synagogues. The time will come that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God's service.” So Mr. Graciousness may have thought, “Well, he has been by the providence of God put in our hands by God and so now we will do the Lord a favor by putting him to death.” He was the founder of a dynasty of priests, but of course priests according to the flesh, but he was himself put out of the priesthood by the Romans, by one of the Romans, because of actions that he had performed. But he was still the power behind the throne, for five of his sons had succeeded him. And now his son-in-law was the high priest of the day.

Again, notice the irony. Here is a priest who is a priest according to the Law of Moses, or put this way, in the simplest way, a priest according to the flesh, stands before the High Priest of God according to the Spirit. Or put in another way, the priest from Aaron and Levi stands before the Great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, who has neither beginning of life, nor end of days, without father, without mother, who abides an eternal priest, again the irony is excruciating. To think of this earthly priest, standing before the eternal priest, and judging the eternal priest.

Now Caiaphas was his son-in-law. He was a religious degenerate who prostituted the divine office for personal gain. And oh how many there have been down through the years who have done that. Caiaphas was a man who heaped up for himself a massive amount of money while he was serving in the priesthood. When the Romans seized Jerusalem in 70 A.D. they found a fortune of vast size stored away by him. In fact, when the British pound was worth a pound one of the commentators said that they found two and a half million pounds stored away by him which he derived from the office. Now remember who he is. He's a man who has his tradition from Aaron.

Remember the priests of the Old Testament and the high priests on the Day of Atonement he had the miter on his brow, and written across the miter, the headdress, was “Holiness to the Lord.” And as the Lord’s earthly representative he carried out the ministry that was set out in the Law of Moses. Malachi said the characteristic thing of the priest was that he should keep knowledge. In other words, the priest should be a student of the word of God, should be able to settle questions of the teaching of the word of God, and then in addition should be characterized by holiness to the Lord. Now here is Caiaphas, as an earthly priest from Levi and Aaron, standing before him who has all of the knowledge of the infinite God, and who is the utterly Holy One of God.

Sometimes we’re inclined to look off and say, “Yes, that was Annas. He was a religious man. There is Caiaphas. He was a religious man.” Religious people may fall into the basest of sins, and of course they can and do. And what makes it especially bad is that they are such hypocrites in doing it. But let us not forget that the same sins that characterized the hypocrite religious priests and preachers are the sins that often characterize us in our profession of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So let us not look at Annas and Caiaphas and say, “Ah, this applies to preachers. This applies to religious people who hold religious office.” It certainly does, but it also applies to us as well.

Now our Lord is before Annas and in the 19th verse the story continues. It is interrupted by the reference to Peter, and we will talk about that later on when we discuss Peter and how he learns the truth of Romans chapter 7. In fact, the Johannine account here is rather interesting. It’s not common that this is done. I don’t know whether you can imagine yourself in a situation like this, but let’s just imagine that with you out in the audience. In fact there are two sections of you. And you over here on the right you are the sheep, and you over here are the goats. And so let’s just imagine that we have two stages before us. And on one stage over here is being played out a particular drama. And then over here on the stage, another stage, and another play is being acted out over here. So that we have two plays being acted out at the same time.

Now that is the way John describes this account, because you see, in the foreground is our Lord and the dealing with Annas and Caiaphas and the high priests and the Romans. But in the background there is Peter. And remember Peter has said that he would never deny the Lord, even if it meant his life. And the Lord Jesus has said to him, “Look Peter, before the cock crows” in one case twice “you will deny me three times.” So on one drama, one stage, the drama of Peter is being played out, and on the other stage the drama of our Lord and the high priests is being played out. And here John is describing events from both of these. So we’re going to skip the play that has Peter on the stage for the moment, and deal simply with this play over here in which the Lord Jesus Christ is appearing before the priests.

And so in verse 19 now, he is before the priest, and the high priest asks Jesus of his disciples and of his doctrine. I find that rather interesting because what he is now doing is fishing for information. The Jews had a law that was very similar to our law. In other words, a man was presumed innocent until he was demonstrated to be guilty. They also had a preliminary appearance before authorities in which individuals simply brought testimony. We generally bring a charge against a person, and then he appears to defend himself. But in the case of the Jewish law, the first preliminary hearing was simply a hearing of the witnesses, and then a charge was brought, if the witnesses justified it. So this is a preliminary inquiry, at best, and Annas is fishing for information. Obviously he feels he doesn’t really have anything legal that he can put his hands on, but he’s looking for our Lord to incriminate himself. And so he asks him concerning his disciples, and concerning his doctrine.

Now I think it’s very striking that John says he asks him first concerning his disciples. In other words, he’d like to know something about the reasons of the success of his organization. He’s not interested in the truth. The truth is not really the most important thing for him. The most important thing is the success of his undertaking, his ministry. What he wants, of course, is to make our Lord a kind of underground schemer, carrying on a work with an organization in the midst of

the normal life of the land, where in effect it is they who are the ones who have the underground kind of organization, which is seeking to put our Lord to death.

Now the second thing he asks about is his doctrine, and you'll notice not much is said with reference to that. And the reason for that, in my opinion, is this, our Lord is concerned about one truth. That one truth is his Messiahship. So when they ask him about his teaching, it is his claim that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, for you see that's the fundamental claim.

You know when I first became a Christian the Lord, before I became a Christian the Lord impressed upon me, I guess it was my upbringing in a Presbyterian church in which I had at least been exposed to the gospel of Christ, and had studied the Westminster Catechism, Shorter Catechism, and had learned some things in Sunday school, attended Sunday school until I was old enough to decide that I wanted to go out and play golf on Sunday mornings since that was the time when the course was the clearest of the crowd, it was about when I was fourteen years of age. But I did spend all of those years in Sunday school up to that time. And I had learned some things about the Bible in a very objective kind of way. But I was impressed with this, and this stuck with me through the years of my unbelief in high school and college, and that truth was this; if the Bible is the word of God then, of course, there is no halfway question about the truth of God. If the Scriptures really are the word of God, then we must bow to the Scriptures. If the Lord Jesus is really the Son of God, and the Messiah of Israel, and then of course everything that he says is truth and we must respond to it.

So the important issue is his Messianic office. If he is the Messianic Son of God, that settles the question. So they ask him about his doctrine, and I'm sure that what they were thinking about was this Messianic claim. Now our Lord's answer is most remarkable. He says, “Why are you asking me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them. Behold they know what I said. I taught always in the synagogue, I taught in the temple, I did not slink around in the back alleys of Jerusalem. I did not enter into the homes of people who were surreptitiously following the teaching that I was giving seeking to draw to myself special disciples. I taught in the synagogues, where public

ministry was given. I taught in the temple area, where others were teaching. They know exactly what I have taught. Ask them who heard me, what I have said unto them. They know what I have said.” That’s a remarkable thing, because it indicates that our Lord’s ministry was patent, it was open and above board. He did not in any way, “I play the hypocrite.” He spoke plainly, and clearly, and openly. And I like to emphasize that word plain too. It was patent. It was, to use a word that my old English teacher in college used to like to use, pellucid, pellucid. In other words, there was no question whatsoever that he claimed to be the Messiah, “They know” he says, “what I have said unto them.” That term incidentally, is not the term for knowledge by experience, but knowledge of the facts for they have heard them, and also they know inherently that what I have said is that I am the Messiah. “Ask them.” He talked then with what might be called affection and with effect. And Annas’ ignorance and Caiaphas’ ignorance, if we may call it ignorance, is without excuse.

You know that is really applicable to us today, if I may be allowed for just a moment to make an application. I would dare say that if you’re in this audience and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you went out of this audience as an unbeliever in the Lord Jesus and someone were to say to you, “What do they teach in Believers Chapel?” you would probably without question be able to say, “They teach that Jesus was the Son of God. I don’t believe that, but they teach that Jesus was the Son of God. They teach that he was the Messiah. They teach that salvation is only through Jesus Christ.” I would say that probably, if you are here this morning and even if you have not yet entered into a personal relationship with the Lord you would know that that is what is taught in this place by all of the teachers here who stand on this platform and teach the word of God.

“Ask them, they know” our Lord said. Now notice he’s appealing to the crowd. He’s not saying, “Ask my disciples, they know.” But he’s just saying, “Ask all these people who heard me in the temple and in the synagogue, they know that I claim to be the Messiah.”

Well at this point we read in verse 22, “When he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?” This

argument is the first resort of stupidity and hate. That is, let's make it physical. And so he, because of the fact that the words of our Lord had stung him, he thought that by striking our Lord he could make a point for their position, not realizing of course that he only made another point for our Lord's position. The truth is always objectionable to those who desire a case at any cost.

We all know the story, the old story, of the lawyer who was trying to “inculcate legal principles” in quote of course, for you lawyers, “legal principles into a young lawyers experience.” He said, “If the law's on your side, emphasize the law. If the facts are on your side, emphasize the evidence. If neither are, attack the other lawyer.” [Laughter] Now the fact that lawyers learn that very well is evidenced by our public life this day. When one of our public officials is finding it very uncomfortable to be in the position that he is in and so he's lashing out and attacking others, seeking to divert attention away from the issues in the case in which he is involved. That's a personal opinion, it's not the opinion of Believers Chapel, or the elders, or the deacons, [Laughter] but it happens to be my own personal opinion.

Well, I always think of Irving Kristol's great comment, I still think it's one of the really great comments. Mr. Kristol's a Jewish man, a teacher of political science and a very astute man who writes editorials in *The Wall Street Journal*. I always read every one of them, because I enjoy his writing very much. He said, “Remember when we lack the will to see things as they really are, there is nothing so mysterious as the obvious.” “When we lack the will to see things as they really are, there is nothing so mysterious as the obvious.”

And so the soldier, thinking that he can strike a point for his side, reaches out and slaps our Lord across the face. And Alfred Edersheim, the great Jewish Christian interpreter who wrote those magnificent volumes on the life of Christ said, “Humanity itself seems to reel and stagger under this blow, for he struck a blow for human nature, and human nature has been taking that position against Jesus Christ down through the years.” Peter may have been thinking about this scene when in a later time he wrote in his first epistle concerning the Lord Jesus, “Whom when he was reviled, reviled not again. When he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”

And will you notice too what this man said. He said, “Answerest thou the high priest so?” or “in this manner?” In other words, he diverted attention away from the content of our Lord’s words to the way in which they were spoken. That was clever, but that’s characteristic of human beings. They often seek to divert attention from the truth to things that do not bear on the truth. So, “Answerest thou the high priest in this manner?” Well our Lord had done nothing but simply put his finger on the truth of the situation. And so he answers the soldier, “If I have spoken evil,” now notice he doesn’t talk about the manner in which he spoke, he speaks about the truth that he was speaking. So he brings the issue back to the truth again, “If I have spoken evil, then bear witness of the evil, but if I have spoken well then why are you smiting me?” our Lord has said. You can sense the majesty of the divine Son of God as he turns from the manner the soldier was talking about to the content of his words.

Well, our time is up. Let me just close by a few comments. Caiaphas of course, and Annas both for that matter, illustrate the danger of being an ecclesiastic. In their view of the temple and the nation, everything must be preserved for us at all costs, even at the cost of the truth. In his view of doctrine he’s the one who said, “It’s expedient for us that one should die, that the nation not lose its privileged position.” Someone has said concerning him that “He was as fixed as the ice of an arctic winter, as unreceptive as the dead.” Well, the facts are that’s what he was, spiritually dead.

And then if I may, let me say one other thing. In his attitude to Jesus Christ, he illustrates the danger of the ecclesiastic and also, if I may say it, the religious. Now this same author said with reference to Caiaphas, “Jesus, whose poverty even the poor had pitied and relieved, whose mercy men with unloosed tongues had blessed, whose meekness had won children’s hearts, whose gentle grace had evoked their praise, whose feet women had kissed, what is Jesus to man like that? He’s a pawn in his game, a tool in his hands, a stepping stone in his ambition, a decoy to mislead an opponent.” What is he to us? Are we to sacrifice him to our pleasures, our desires?

You know, it’s very striking to me that Peter at this point is the person who denies our Lord. Because we tend to read something like this and turn it aside and say, “That applied to Peter, and that



applied to the apostles, and that applied to Annas and Caiaphas, but it doesn't apply to us.” But oh it does apply to us. You see our Lord has made the claim to be the Messianic Son of God and we know it, we know it in this western world. And many in the eastern world too know his claims, there is no question about it. You see, the trial is of our Lord historically, but the trial is also of us. How shall we respond? Well Peter gives the typical response of some believers. He said, “I think I would like to pass in this case.” And so he denied the Lord. He wouldn't speak up. And so finally when someone said to him directly, “You were one of them” of course he denied it with a curse, several of them in fact. And that's the position that we often find ourselves in too. We know we're believers. We'll go out and weep bitterly. But when the time comes to speak we won't speak. We'll say, “I'd like to avoid that question.” But the world does that too, and if any in this audience have not yet come to Christ it's so easy to say. The trial was the trial of Jesus before the Annas, and Caiaphas, “but it's not my trial.” Ah yes, but it is your trial. What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he, is still the question.

What should Annas and Caiaphas have done? Of course when the Lord Jesus confessed that he was the Messiah these men who looked forward to him in the divine program, who wore the garments, and the miter, and holiness to the Lord, designed to represent the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, when Jesus came on the scene they should have knelt before him, ripped their clothes off, taken their miter off, put it on the head of the Lord Jesus, and like Caiaphas who prophesied, “It's expedient that one man should die for the people” he should have prophesied, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, the fulfillment of all that we have stood for in our office.” May God help us to respond similarly.

[Prayer] Father we are so grateful to Thee for these marvelous records which so magnificently display human nature in its sin, deception, rebellion, corruption, and the Lord Jesus Christ in his magnificent truthfulness, holiness, grace, and mercy. O God, if there are some in this audience who have never believed in him, may at this very moment they con...