



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 26:57-68

“Caiaphas, the Cynical Time Server”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our Scripture reading for today is found in two portions of the New Testament, we are studying some of the leading characters in the passion of Jesus Christ. We began this series of messages last Sunday with a study of Pilate, a vacillating man who did not have the courage of his convictions. Today we are to study “Caiaphas, the Cynical Time Server.” And so I’m asking you if you will to turn with me to the 11th chapter of the Gospel of John for our first passage from the word and then we’ll turn to Matthew chapter 26 for our second. John chapter 11 beginning with the 47th verse, now for the sake of some of you who may not have remembered the exact context, the Apostle John in his wonderful Gospel in which he sets forth for us seven signs or miracles designed to bring men to faith in Christ has just recorded the seventh and climactic one. That of course is the sign of the resurrection of Lazarus. Lazarus’ resurrection as the other signs of John’s gospel has a two fold effect, some believe, some do not believe. And the 42nd verse picks up the story at that point,

“Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, what do we? For this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them,

named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.”

Let's now turn back a few pages to Matthew chapter 26 and begin reading with verse 57 in which we have an account of the trial of Jesus. This is the illegal midnight meeting in which Jesus is condemned, and it occurs historically a few days after that preceding Scripture which we have just read. Verse 57,

“And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witnesses against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, this fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. (By the way, since I will not say anything about this in the message, let me just make a brief comment at this point, this is not what Jesus said, it sounds very similar to that which he did say. He said destroy this body, and in three days I will raise it from the dead, or destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it from the dead, but he was speaking about his body. They have confused his words and say) this fellow said I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? What

is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace, And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: (Mark says that he said I am.) nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?”

May I also add one further word, they asked Jesus to prophesy unto him, they laughed at him, and spat in his face, smote him. It is rather remarkable that Jesus had just made a remarkable prophesy he had said that “before the cock shall crow twice, thou shall deny me thrice, Peter.” And as these men said, “Prophesy unto us, who is he that smote thee?” The cock crewed. The prophecies of Jesus were coming to pass right under their eyes. But being blind, they did not see. May God bless this reading of his word. Shall we bow in prayer?”

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the Holy Scriptures and for the light that has come to us from them. And we recognize Lord that the chief prerequisite for understanding Thy word is receptivity to the things of God. May the Holy Spirit prepare our hearts, setting them apart unto faith and trust in Jesus Christ, so that we not only hear the words of Scripture but understand their meaning? We thank Thee Lord for these that are gathered in this auditorium today to listen to Thy word, and may as the word of God is proclaimed their hearts be responsive and may the Holy Spirit teach and instruct.

Each one of us Lord has deep needs. We often are so blind that we cannot see them and so deaf that we cannot hear them, enable us oh God to look at ourselves in the light of Thy word, and then to see Thee in the light of Thy word. For we know that Thou art able to meet all of our needs.

We know Lord that many are in this audience today troubled and distressed, and we pray for them. Some have great problems and we ask Lord that Thou would strengthen and encourage them and give them light upon their pathway. We pray that needs may be met; some needs which are financial, some which are spiritual, some which are mental and physical. O God we pray that through Jesus Christ our needs shall be met. Enable us oh God to have the desire and the will to give Thee a chance in our lives. We know that Thou hast said in Thy word, “Work out thine own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of thy good pleasure.” And we know that this text addressed to Christians is not only an exhortation, but also a promise and so Lord may we each give Thee a chance to do that which Thou art able to do in our lives.

We pray again for our country and for its leadership. We pray oh God for our president and ask that Thou would give him wisdom and guidance. We pray for the many programs in which this country is engaged, and we pray oh God that again that which is done may be in accordance with the proclamation of the gospel Christ and Thy will.

We thank Thee oh God, for the dedication of men in public service, and Lord we thank Thee for the ones who have given their lives for our country and ask Thy blessing upon their families. We pray that Thou will console them, may somehow through these experiences there come to these families involved, an experience of the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We thank Thee for the assembly of Christians here Lord and we pray Thy blessing upon them. And as this year has begun we pray that throughout this year Thou would

lead us in a way that would be fruitful for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Enable us oh God to be the kind of Christians that Thou would have us to be in this year in which we are living. Deliver us from pride and self righteousness, traps into which it is so easy to fall. And give us the humility that comes from Thee, and also Lord a willingness to do Thy will.

We commit ourselves to Thee and each one present. We especially pray for the young people, so many of them in this room. We pray Thy blessing upon them, give them attentiveness, give them responsiveness, and give them a sense of meaning and purpose and mission in life. For Jesus' sake. Amen

[Message] The subject for today in our series of studies of the characters who are important in the suffering of our Lord Jesus is “Caiaphas, the Cynical Time Server.” Caiaphas was the champion of religion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ and he was a time server. Webster says that a person who for his own advantage deliberately surrenders his principles is a time server. I was tempted to think of Caiaphas as an ecclesiastic, for that of course is what he was. But not all ecclesiastics are time servers. Some of us may wonder about some in great authority in the religious world, I was kind of amused by some things that Eugene Carson Blake said just a few months ago. Having been for many years a Presbyterian myself, I guess it kind of touched something in me, but Eugene Blake said that “if we are to have union among our church, the key to it will be the acceptance of the doctrine of episcopacy.” And he went on to say as a Presbyterian, that none Episcopal churches either already have officials who are sometimes worse than bishops, or are coming to the conclusion that they need the kind of pastoral and symbolic office that bishops at their best are and always have been. I wonder if the alternatives are the two. That is bishops or others that are as bad as bishops or else we need bishops. Why can we not just have what the Bible sets forth

before us, godly elders? But then after all, that’s not too important a point I guess, so I shouldn’t scourge Dr. Blake for just that point and call him a time server.

I was quite interested however in some things that happened in the past few weeks in other spheres of Christendom. All of England was shocked recently with the renouncement of his membership in the catholic church by the Reverend Charles Davis who was probably the most prominent English Roman Catholic. It was about as startling news in Brittan as if the Beatles had disbanded because they didn’t like the sound of drums and electric guitar. For this man was very prominent in the Roman Catholic Church. He was a leading figure in the post Vatican counsel renewal of Catholicism and wrote often in the Jesuit weekly, America.

He said that he was renouncing the Roman Catholic Church for three reasons. First of all he said, “The church has become a vast impersonal unfree, inhuman system that has lost its capacity for love. And then secondly, he charged that the church in seeking to establish its authority had lost its passion for the truth. And finally, he said that there can be, that he can no longer find an intellectual justification for the churches teachings on the authority of the papacy or of two doctrines associated with it, the immaculate conception and the assumption, the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary. Now that man, regardless of what you may say about him is not a time server. He is a man who is willing to take a stand for his convictions, and although he is a Roman Catholic, nevertheless, I think that all of us can admire a man who in the midst of that system is willing to stand up and say that he thinks these things are wrong with it.

Then about a year ago, an evangelical clergyman by the name of Herbert Carson who was an outstanding evangelical and very active in intervarsity work in Brittan said that he too had come to the end of the road. And in typical fashion as preachers do, as Mr. Davis, he had three points for getting out, so Mr. Carson had three points for getting out. And his three points were that he was pledged to the use of the Book of Common Prayer in the Anglican Church and he had come to feel that this was a bondage of the

spirit. And then secondly, he had come to believe that the established nature of the English church, the Anglican church was contrary to the Bible. And finally, and most importantly, he had come to believe that baptismal regeneration was not a teaching of the New Testament and furthermore his arguments for infant baptism had been demolished and so as a result of that he felt that it was dishonest to continue in the Anglican church and for this reason he resigned. He was a man forty-one years of age at the time, he's now a little older than that, a man with four children and he gave his bishop the customary three months notice and resigned. He was the second evangelical clergyman to resign from the Church of England.

So not all ecclesiastics are time servers, just because a man does preach the word, it doesn't necessarily mean that he's a hypocrite and a cynic. Although of course we all grant there may be some in the crowd. Caiaphas' character emerges from events surrounding Lazarus' resurrection. Caiaphas had been appointed by Valerius Gratus Pilate's predecessor, and he had begun to serve in eighteen A.D. and he ruled as high priest in Israel until thirty-seven A.D. He was the son in law of the unscrupulous Ananus who had been deposed. He was a cold blooded cynic and a hypocrite, and you can see it as it emerges from the passages that we have read.

The Romans when they ceased Jerusalem found over two and a half million pounds sterling which would be the equivalent say of ten million dollars. Found that stored away by the high priests, money that they had made from the poor in Israel. And so here we have then a man who is an ecclesiastic, a cynic a hypocrite, a time server, and I want to take a look at his character and see these things as they emerge and today draw some lessons from the life of Caiaphas, that is as it is presented in the New Testament.

So will you turn with me first of all to the 11th chapter of the Gospel of John in which we have the prophecy of this man Caiaphas the advice that he gave to the people of Israel in the time of crisis. Lazarus has just been raised from the dead, and now there occurs the supreme ecclesiastical council meeting, although it occurs at night, and of

course it was illegal at midnight, for according to the rules, no formal business could be conducted except from sunrise to sunset. So this meeting is an illegal meeting. But they're anxious in getting rid of this man Jesus who has performed this notable sign of raising Lazarus. And so they come together and they ask the question in verse 47, “What do we?” If we put that in our language today, we would say, what are we going to do? Now I want you to notice that they admit the fact that signs have been wrought. They say, “For this man doeth many miracles.” They have no question about the reality of the things that Jesus had done. But it is obvious from their words that the temple is more important to them than the truth, and the safety of the nation with its privileges under Roman authority was also more important to them than the truth of God. In a few moments, as we saw in our study of Pilate last week, these people will say that we have no king but Caesar. And they are on the road now to acknowledging the fact that they are not really under God at all but they are dominated by their own interests.

In the 48th verse in the Greek text, there's a great deal of stress upon the little word, our. “The Romans shall come and take away both our place and our nation.” When at this point, Mr. Religion speaks, and he boorishly mouths expediency under the guise of patriotism. He says in the 49th verse, “Ye know nothing at all.” As if to say, “I have all of the knowledge and wisdom shall die with me.” “You don't know anything at all, nor have you considered that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation perish not.” Now I want you to notice the alternatives that Caiaphas sets before the Jewish council. He says that “it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people,” or on the other hand, the people must perish. Jesus must die or the people must die. And so if we allow this one man to die, then the people shall not die, it is either the people or Jesus.

Now of course the things that Caiaphas was speaking about were the rights and privileges that the Jews had under the Romans. Because they had been a kind of disagreeable nation, the Romans had given them privileges that other nations did not

have, and they wanted to preserve these things for themselves. And Caiaphas was particularly anxious to conserve it because he was the leader of the nation and his spot was a stake. And so he said, it was either the nation on the one hand or it is Jesus on the other hand. But you see, he has not considered a third alternative, the alternative of course that is the alternative with which the nation is faced is the alternative of accepting Jesus as he is and trusting God to provide for them in their relationship to the Roman nation. But it's not a question of that, the fact that Jesus could have possibly been what he was claiming to be and that these signs were demonstrations of the truthfulness of his message never seemed to occur to Caiaphas.

Now remember who he is. He is the High Priest, in the nation of Israel. What is the High Priest? Well the High Priest is the man who has his traditions from Aaron in the Old Testament. He's the man who has the miter upon his brow, he's the man upon whose lips there should be truth, for as Malachi said, it is the priest who is to keep knowledge. So this is the man with the great spiritual tradition of the Old Testament, the man who is to be the teacher of the truth to the nation which has been committed into the hands of the prophets and the priests. And he speaks in this way. But as we have noticed so often in the Gospel of John, there is a tremendous irony in the statement that Caiaphas makes. He said, “It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.” What Caiaphas meant was simply this, we shall eliminate Jesus of Nazareth, and if we eliminate Jesus of Nazareth, then we the nation and the temple, we shall be preserved. It's a case of elimination pure and simple; we must get rid of this man in order that we might survive.

But now John sees in this again, some of that sublime irony which runs through his whole narrative. And it is simply this, that this man is an unconscious prophet. He says in verse 51, “And this spake he not of himself, but being High Priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation.” In other words, Caiaphas who thought that he was offering a piece of cynical utilitarianism in reality is summarizing the gospel of

Jesus Christ. Now what is so remarkable about this and so humorous is that the Sadducees had a doctrine in which they said that they did not believe in fate. They were kind of opposed to the biblical doctrines of predestination and so it's rather remarkable I think and kind of amusing that these men who did not believe in the fact that God really controlled the affairs of men, that they were masters of their own souls and masters of their own destiny, the man who was the leader among them becomes the mouthpiece of God and utters things that he himself if he knew the real significance of would never have dared to utter. As a matter of fact, as I say he summarizes the gospel, he says, “It's expedient that one man should die in order that the whole nation should not perish.” In the one case, he speaks of elimination, let's eliminate him. In the other case, God speaks through this man and gives us the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. And also, the remarkable things about this prophesy is that that is exactly what did happen. This man did die, but contrary to Caiaphas' wisdom, the nation did perish. However, those who put their trust in him did not die, they did not perish, but they today have everlasting life in the presence of the one whom Caiaphas prepared as the last Passover lamb.

Now let's turn over to the trial of Caiaphas, the one that he conducted in Matthew chapter 26. What a contrast in the two men, Caiaphas and the Lord Jesus. In the one case we have the man who is the servant of religion, in the other case we have the man who is preeminently the servant of God. In the one case we have the High Priest of men, Caiaphas, in the other, the High Priest of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. In the one we have a man who is naturally a histrionic kind of man, a dramatic kind of man, a cynic and a hypocrite. In the other we have a man who is the only authentic man who ever lived, the only genuine man who ever lived, the only real man who ever lived, the only man of whom we could say that he was true blue, our Lord Jesus.

And then of course I think there's also in the Matthean account, a great deal of biting irony. One the deliverer, the deliverer of men is standing before Caiaphas, this little

priest, this little puppet priest, the deliverer is standing before him in bonds. The holy one stands condemned before the councils of men, the God-man is accused of blasphemy, the resurrection and the life is sentenced to die. Oh the irony of the trial and the death and the resurrection in fact, the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well the circumstances are stated for us in verses 57 and 58; here we are going to see the work of darkness done illegally in darkness. If there ever was a fulfillment of the text in John 3 and verse 19, it is surely here in the trial of our Lord Jesus Christ. “This is the condemnation that light is come into the world and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.” So Jesus is going to stand before men who are conducting an illegal tribunal. Jost, who was a Jew and a friend of Alfred Edersheim once said that “the death of Jesus Christ was a private murder committed by burning enemies, not a sentence of a regularly constituted Sanhedrin.” And that is true.

Some years ago, I married a young man to a young lady and in the wedding, (I started to say in the funeral ceremony. It didn't come out though.) In the wedding ceremony, there was a young Jewish man, a very prominent man in the city and still a very prominent man in the city, a very lovely person too, a person with whom I got acquainted and whom I liked very much. In the course of the relationship with the young man who was married, they discussed the claims of Jesus Christ, and this young Jewish man, intellectual, intelligent and wealthy who had all privileges that it was possible for a person to have said this, “Jack, I was raised in Judaism, I will not leave it, if I am wrong, then I will just have to go to Hell.” The attitude that we take often toward the truth of God in which we say we have been brought up in a certain way, we cannot possibly leave this way, is an attitude which is diametrically opposed to the truth of God. The question is not how we have been brought up, the question is not how we have been taught, the question is not in what family we have grown up, the question is not what education we have had and its environment and culture, the question is what is the truth of God? Jesus now stands before men who obviously had never really investigated

his claims at all. If they had bothered to investigate his claims, they would have come to the truth, they would have come to the truth of who he is and what he has done.

And even after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they have no excuse, because God has gone out of his way to give them ample opportunity still to find the truth. When the resurrection takes place, the soldiers about the tomb of Jesus go quickly to the Jews and tell them exactly what has happened. Instead of saying perhaps this deceiver was telling the truth after all, they say no we want some false witnesses who will testify that this is not really true. We want you to testify that when this happened you were really asleep, and we'll take care of you just so long as we prevent this doctrine of the resurrection from gaining any sway. They have never really considered the facts of the truth of God as found in the word of God.

I've told you once before of the little girl who didn't know what God was like. She was in a department store and the manager of the department was watching her on pins and needles for he saw her pick up some crayons and a coloring book and open them up and begin to color, he naturally was wondering if she was really going to buy the book after all, and he walked over and with a great deal of trepidation he said, “Little girl, what are you drawing?” And she said, “I'm drawing a picture of God.” And he said, “How do you know what God looks like?” She said “I don't, that's why I'm drawing the picture.” There are lots of people like this you know, they've never really investigated that which the word of God has to say about him, and consequently they have made up their own ideas of what he is like.

The Jews were absolutely closed and so as Jesus stood before them, three questions come before the court. They're very quick questions. False witnesses is the first. They attempt to gain false witnesses in order that they might put Jesus to death, but they are unable to find any until finally, two wretched characters come forward and give their testimony which itself was false. And finally, the High Priest Caiaphas arose and said to Jesus who was answering nothing all of this time, he says in the 62nd verse,

“Answerest thou nothing? What is it that these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace.” I’ve often wondered why Jesus was quiet here, I don’t think it was because he had already given his testimony fully to Caiaphas for in a moment he gives further testimony. I know that it is legal that it is legally true that an accused is not required to clarify the testimony of the prosecution and so it appears to me that perhaps that is what Jesus has in mind here. If the men cannot agree and cannot really present a truthful accusation against him why should he clarify their own prosecution? I don’t think he was trying to take the Fifth Amendment, but he was being silent for the simple reason that it was not his responsibility to speak to men who were telling lies about him.

And so the High Priest having dropped that comes to the second question and it is the question of Messiahship and he says in the 63rd verse, “And the High Priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God.” Now I want to stop here for just a moment and point out to you how excruciatingly a denial this was of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why do men swear by an oath? When we go into court and we are asked to swear to the truthfulness of what we are saying, have you ever wondered why we have to do that? Well it’s obvious; the reason we have to do this is because we so rarely ever tell the truth. In other words, it is a silent testimony to the fact that men do not live in the presence of God. This is why we’re asked to put our hands upon a Bible, or in some other way give an oath. And I want to tell you that putting your hands on the Bible will not bring any truth out of a man any more than putting your hands on something else of course. But the very point of the oath is a recognition of the lack of truthfulness implicit in a human heart. If men outside of our courts do not know the depravity of man, men in the courts do know that men are depraved and liars. So when Caiaphas the High Priest says to Jesus, “I adjure thee by the living God” I’m asking you to take an oath by God he was in effect saying “I deny that you are the Son of God” because it was an implicit recognition on his part that Jesus did not tell the truth always and that he needed to be placed upon oath too. It is said an Englishman’s word is his bond, I’ve never believed

that, I never will believe it; I don't think it's true. I'm sure that an Englishman made up that statement, not someone else. An Englishman's word is not his bond; no man's word is his bond. I wish it were true, it's just not true. The only man of whom it could ever be said that his word was his bond was is Lord Jesus Christ, and here he is called upon by this lying High Priest to swear according to the living God. So Jesus who needs no adjury is asked to swear himself. “I adjure thee by the living God tell us whether you be the Christ, the Son of God.”

Now at this point, the Matthean text says that Jesus said, “Thou hast said.” I don't think we would have any question about the meaning of this, this means affirmative, this means I am. But if you have any question about it, then you only have to turn to the Markan gospel for there Mark records that he said, “I am.” In other words, Jesus in the presence of Caiaphas, in the presence of the Pharisees and Sadducees of that council affirmed that he was the Messiah the Son of the living God. And I want you to know that the spiritual temperature of the Sanhedrin's council that day went far beyond the boiling point at that particular statement of the Lord Jesus.

Let me take you back to the Old Testament for just a moment and remind you of an experience that Moses had. You remember that that when he was going to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt that he asked who it was that was calling him. He had seen that remarkable vision of, and it wasn't just a vision it was of course an experience. He had seen that remarkable experience, of the burning bush, and as he stood by and received the call that he was to go back and deliver Israel out of the hands of the Egyptians, he turned to the one who was there whose voice he had heard that this was holy ground, and he said, “What is your name that I may tell them that Thou hast sent me?” And there came the words, “I Am that I Am.” Sometimes we wonder what God is like, and the moment we say God is like this and God is like that and God is like something else, we have demoted God from his absolute supremacy and sovereignty. The reason that God says to Moses when he asks what's his name, I Am that I Am is

because that's all that God can say. With what can he possibly compare himself? He is above any comparison with human beings, he can not be judged by human standards, and consequently he must say I am that I am. I am myself, and wherever I am there will be that experience of the burning bush, the bush that is on fire with the judgment of the holy God and yet is not consumed. And when Jesus stood in that council this morning in this illegal council and said, “I am the messiah, the son of the living God,” he himself was saying the same thing that the God of the Old Testament said when he said, “I Am that I Am.” I am God! And if of course this has been presented in a symbolic or pictorial way, there would have been the burning bush right there in the council of the Sanhedrin. That's why those who say that the thermometers were bursting at this point in the council of the Sanhedrin were absolutely right. It was the eternal God affirming that he is what he is and he must say that. Jesus said, “I am the messiah, the son of the living God.” There the testimony has been made. The final, the last and final prophecy has been made by the prophet, our Lord Jesus and there isn't anything else that he can say.

But let me say to you this morning in the audience that there is in this statement of our Lord Jesus a tremendous truth. For when Jesus Christ under oath states that he is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, and in himself gathers up all of the meanings of that term, the Messiah, the Son of the living God, then of course he has bound himself to us with his own word, and with his own oath, and Jesus is someone who does not lie. And he has bound himself to us as the Messiah, the one who has come to die for the sins of men, the one who has come to be our Savior and our Lord and our God and who one day shall come again and establish his kingdom upon the earth. He is the Messiah and he's bound us to himself. Isn't that wonderful? Isn't it wonderful to know he has by an oath bound himself to me?

Well, he adds, “Nevertheless, I say unto you.” I think that nevertheless must be understood something like this. I think that when he said, “I am the Messiah the Son of the living God,” that the mouth of Caiaphas the priest fell open and he stared with

incredulous wonder at the fact that a man could possibly say, “I am the son of the living God.” And Jesus then looking right into the eyes of this man who now is on the stand before Jesus, he says, “Nevertheless Caiaphas,” in spite of that look of unbelief and shock that has come over your face, “I say unto you hereafter you shall see.” You think you’ll never see it, but you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of Heaven. If you do not accept me as the Messiah, the Son of the living God now, you shall have to see me as the King who comes at my Second Advent. My day is coming, this is your day, but mine is on its way.

Now Caiaphas rends his clothes saying, “He has spoken blasphemy, what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.” The rending of the clothes was a very formal act. You know in Brittan when a man gets ready to receive judgment from a court, the judge will put on his black hat. That’s a sign that now judgment is to come. Now the putting on of the black hat is just a pure ceremony, it doesn’t really mean anything at all, and in the days of our Lord Jesus, when the High Priest now rends his clothes, it’s like putting on the black hat. In those days actually, the very clothes that were to be rent were specified, and they were those that could be repaired very easily. And also the rent was to be in a certain place and of a specified length. So you can see, that this was not something that arose on the spur of the moment, he was simply going through a formal act.

Sometime ago I read a story about a chorus girl who introduced her sweetheart to another chorus girl and he transferred his affection to the second chorus girl. And her anger was not directed toward the man who had transferred his affections but rather to the girl to whom he had transferred his affections. And she wrote her a little note, and in it I think you’ll notice the contrast between what she felt and the convention. She said, “Look here, you little cat, you know blame well that we’ve been going together for months. Wait till I lay my hands on you, you good for nothing bleached blonde. I’ll

scratch your eyes out, pull out your hair, pull out your teeth, and throw acid on you.

Yours truly. [Laughter] P.S. Please excuse pencil.” [Laughter]

What Caiaphas was saying of course was, “Alas, Alas, to think that Abraham should have given birth to such a son.” And so he rends his clothes in hypocritical disdain for the prophecy that Jesus is made.

My time is almost up, let me just sum up what I have to say about this man by giving you very quickly three observations. And the first, there is a serious admonition in the experience the High Priest. Caiaphas was a time server; he was a time server in his view of the nation and the temple. He thought of Israel not as a channel of revelation, not as a theater for the exercise of the grace of God, not as a mission agency for the reaching of those who did not have the true knowledge of God, but he thought of Israel as an institution with offices and with buildings and with power which would gratify the High Priest.

He also was a time server in his view of doctrine. He said, “It is expedient.” Now I don’t think that Caiaphas was a self consciously evil man, I think that if Caiaphas were to come in this door, and if he were to have been outfitted by Neiman Marcus, no one would notice him as he came in. In fact some may say, “Who is that distinguished looking man? He certainly seems like a kindly man.” I think Caiaphas must have taken up many of the children of his day and blessed them in his arms. And he surely was respected by the men of the time, he was a man who was not a man who had no respect, he wasn’t a hateful kind of man, he was just a man with a closed mind. He didn’t ask, how the things that Jesus had done, how do these things affect the truth of God? He didn’t say is Jesus really the Messiah according to the prophecies of the Bible? Has what he has done, has this been really done by the power of God? But he asked how does this affect the church? How does this affect my position? How does this affect the ministry?

There are so many people like that you know. They do not ask the question “Is it true?” But they ask, “How is this going to affect me?”

And if you’ll pardon a partisan remark, we had a class in Believers Chapel in which was one seminary couple. And in this class, certain of the principles for which Believers Chapel was established were taught. And in one of them we said something about the office of pastor. And in the course of it, this young seminary couple were sitting there and when the man who was teaching the class set forth that which we think the New Testament teaches about this, she turned to her husband when she finished and she punched him a little and she said, “Well if that’s true, then what are we going to do?” If that’s true what are we going to do? Now of course that question if it went just that far is not enough. If she went on from that, “If it’s true what are we going to do then let’s do it.” That’s another matter. That however was not the real response as history after that has shown. But so often you see, we get into this attitude of saying how is this going to affect the church? How can we possibly be a church according to these principles which are so strange? But the question is not that, the question is, “Is it true?” Is it true? And I ask you only to consider all of these things and ask yourself the question “Is it true?” That was the question that Caiaphas needed to ask. Now there are lots of people who say that ecclesiastics are people who do not, are not willing to face the truth. I would say to you that I know many ecclesiastics who have faced the truth. I also know many people who sit in the pew who have not faced the truth either, and God wants us to face the truth. And Caiaphas was a man who was a time server in his attitude toward Jesus Christ. What was Jesus Christ to him? He was a pawn. He was a stepping stone in his ambition. And so we look at Caiaphas and we say, “Ah I don’t want to be like Caiaphas.” But let me ask you this question. You who are in the audience today who may never have believed in Jesus Christ, what is he to you? Is he the Savior of the world, or is he just someone whose teaching you kind of like? We’re not willing to look at

ourselves as we really are. Oh that we had the open heartedness and the open mindedness to say “What do you say God in the word? And I will be amenable to it.”

May I tell you a joke? I've been a little long this morning, and I'm going to go another minute or two. I heard not long ago of a man who had two hairs on his head, that's all, just two hairs on his head. And he nursed those hairs, he combed them, he did not let any of that greasy kid stuff touch his hair at all until one morning he awakened from sleep and looked down on his pillow and there were the two hairs. He said, “My God, I'm bald!” [Laughter] Do you know what Caiaphas should have done? As he stood before the Lord Jesus he should have said to him something like this, “Are you really the Son of the living God? Are you really the Messiah?” Jesus said, “I am.” “Have these miracles been done by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the prophecies of the Old Testament?” “They have sir.” And then Caiaphas should have risen from his chair and prophesied as he took off the miter from off of his head and stepped down, he should have prophesied before all who were there in that council, “Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!” and should have bowed down before him and worshipped him. There is a solemn admonition in the life of Caiaphas, he didn't.

Secondly, there is a startling observation I want to make quickly. Ironically, Caiaphas was right, Jesus was guilty of death, he was bearing our sin. Both God and the High Priest say, “It's necessary that one should die for all.” Men say as they look at Jesus, “Ah that good for nothing man.” God says as he looks at Jesus, “Ah that worthless one.” And both are right. He says he's worthless in his eyes, for that's his real feeling towards Jesus. But the Father looks at him and says he is worthless because he's taken our worthlessness upon himself and is guilty for us.

And finally, a solemn application, it's Caiaphas or Christ, you cannot have both. It's either the cynical time server or it is the authentic Son of God, there's no half-way house. Jesus Christ is either a blasphemer or he's not a blasphemer. And if he's not a blasphemer, he's the Son of God and he must be worshipped. This man so calm so

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majestic in silence, as well as in speech, the judge among the judges, the prophet among the prophets, the priest among the priests, who is he? History, even Jews today do not reecho the sentence of Caiaphas, history and heart answer, “Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” May God give us the insight, the mind and the heart to spiritually rend our garments and acknowledge that he is that, bow down before him in worship.

Some of you in this audience this morning I sense do not know Jesus Christ as your Savior. We don't ask you to do anything except what the Bible sets before you. It is simply to respond in faith, to say, “I thank you oh Lord, for the gift of Jesus Christ, I take him as my Lord and Savior.” Will you not say to him in your heart, “Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God and my Savior?” May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, be and abide with all who know him in sincerity. But oh Father, for those who do not yet know him as the Lamb of God, as the Messiah, the Son of the living God, give them no rest nor peace until the rest in him. And this we ask in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.