

Matthew 26:59-66

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The cohort of priests conduct their trial of Jesus. It consists of false and conflicting testimonies. Jesus does not answer their accusatory questions, to their frustration. But when the high priest demands to know if He is the Messiah and the Son of God, Jesus affirms that He is. Ignoring the truth of His claim, they use this as evidence to condemn Him to death.

This event is known as Jesus's Nigh-Time Trial in the Home of Caiaphas

The parallel gospel account of this event is found in Mark 14:55-64.

- Note: Throughout this portion of commentary, each time a Jewish law was broken by the chief priests and elders as they prosecuted *Jesus*, we identify that rule by means of brackets—i.e. [Rule 2: Neutrality]. The numbering of these rules is according to The Bible Says series about the Religious Prosecution of *Jesus*.

For a complete listing of the broken rules, see The Bible Says article: [Jesus's Trial, Part 1. The Laws Broken By The Religious Leaders: A Summary.](#)

Matthew's Gospel narrative focuses on the second religious trial of *Jesus*.

Jesus's second religious trial, which took place in the home of Caiaphas most likely took place on the night of Nisan 15 (sometime during the dark morning hours on Friday by Roman reckoning).

To learn more about the timing and sequencing of these events, see the Bible Says' ["Timeline: Jesus's Final 24 Hours"](#).

The first religious trial of *Jesus* was His Preliminary Trial in the home of Annas [Rule 5: Illegal Location], the former high priest. John's Gospel narrates *Jesus's* Preliminary Trial (John 18:19-24). It immediately followed *Jesus's* arrest in Gethsemane (John 18:12-13) during the dark morning hours [Rule 6: Illegal Timing]. The prosecution had no concrete evidence that *Jesus* had violated any law [Rule 9: Lack of Evidence], much less a charge to accuse and condemn Him [Rule 7: Lack of Charge].

All they had was an intense hatred of *Jesus* [Rule 2: Neutrality], and a conspiracy to have him killed (Matthew 26:1-2; John 11:47-53) [Rule 1: Conspiracy]. But their conspiracy was now unravelling and threatened to become their undoing.

This threat suddenly emerged when Judas, *Jesus's* disciple and their co-conspirator (Matthew 26:14-16) unexpectedly warned them that *Jesus* had just unmasked him as His betrayer and was aware of their conspiracy. If the rumor or report spread that they were trying to murder the Man

many hoped was the Messiah, it could easily stir a riot that could prompt Rome to replace them—or worse.

The religious leaders were determined to not let that happen. Which was likely why they procured a Roman cohort to go with them to arrest Jesus in the middle of the night (Matthew 26:47-55; John 18:3). Arresting Jesus was one thing, but they also had to convict Him in order to complete their plan.

Complicating the matter was that they would be preoccupied with the religious festival and ceremonies of Unleavened Bread for the next seven days. If they imprisoned Jesus and waited to convict Him until after the festival was over they would risk the riot they feared. Therefore, the scribes, *chief priests*, and elders were convinced they had to convict *Jesus* that night and somehow execute Him in the morning before things got out of hand.

While Jesus was being interrogated [Rule 12: Improper Prosecution] and abused [Rule 10: Abuse] at His preliminary trial at Annas's house, the requisite *council* members from among the Pharisees and Sadducees gathered together in the home of Caiaphas, the high priest (Matthew 26:57). But having failed to discover or manufacture a charge that was sufficient to condemn *Jesus* to death, Annas sent Him to Caiaphas and the council gathered in his home (Matthew 26:57; Mark 14:53; John 18:24).

In an attempt to keep together the events of *Jesus*'s second religious trial as told by Matthew and to help readers locate specific moments within it, the commentary for this section of scripture we be subdivided accordingly.

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4. **CAIAPHAS'S CHARGE**
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1. JESUS'S SECOND RELIGIOUS TRIAL BEGINS (Matthew 26:59-61)

When *Jesus* arrived at His second religious trial without a charge that could be used to condemn *Him*, the religious leaders appear to have become desperate.

From the outset, *Jesus*'s second religious trial was illegal because it violated the following judicial principles:

- **Rule 1: Conspiracy**—The judges had plotted to kill Jesus.

- **Rule 2: Neutrality**—The judges hated Jesus.
- **Rule 3: Rigged Trial**—The outcome was predetermined.

Additionally, it broke the following Jewish laws of legal practice the instant it began:

- **Rule 4: Bribery**—The trial was based on a bribe.
- **Rule 5: Illegal Timing**—No part of a trial involving a capital offense could occur at night.
- **Rule 6: Illegal Location**—The home of Caiaphas was not an authorized location for a trial.

Matthew describes the chaotic scene that appears to have already been urgently in motion before Jesus’s arrival, but without a clear direction to obtain its desperate and deadly goal:

Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death (v 59).

Matthew adds *the chief priests* to “the scribes [lawyers/court reporters] and elders [Pharisees who are on the Sanhedrin *Council*]” who had gathered at Caiaphas’s home (Matthew 26:57). *The chief priests* were leading Sadducees who were on the Sanhedrin *Council*.

The *Council*, Matthew referred to, was the Sanhedrin *Council*. The Sanhedrin was the supreme court of Jewish law. It consisted of seventy-one total members, but it required only twenty-three members to be seated for trials involving capital cases.

Luke tells us that at least one *Council* member—Joseph of Arimathea—who was sympathetic to Jesus was not present during Jesus’s trials (Luke 20:50-51). Nicodemus, another member of the Sanhedrin who admired *Jesus* (John 3:1, 7:50), may also have been absent. Because of this it seems that Matthew did not have all seventy-one members in mind when he wrote that *the whole Council* was there.

What Matthew was saying when he mentioned *the whole Council* was that there was a sufficient number of Sanhedrin judges present (twenty-three or more) and that all of them were all against *Jesus* [Rule 2: Neutrality]. The conspirators may have deliberately avoided informing any Jesus-sympathizers on *the Council* about His arrest or these secret trials to avoid any resistance to their plot.

To learn more about the Sanhedrin *Council*, see The Bible Says article: [“Jesus's Trial, Part 2. The Jewish Law And The Political Actors Who Condemned Jesus.”](#)

Matthew writes that *the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death*.

In saying this, Matthew is specifically informing his readers that the outcome of this second trial is predetermined from the outset to *put Jesus to death* [Rule 3: Rigged]. This tribunal in the home of Caiaphas was not a trial meant to determine whether or not *Jesus* had broken a law worthy of *death*. (He had not broken any of God’s laws). It was a trial in search of a capital crime by means of *false testimony*.

By beginning the trial with *Jesus's* accusers bringing forth their slanders, the Sanhedrin violated their law which required trials involving capital crimes to begin with a statement on behalf of the defendant [Rule 8: Lack of Defense]. Skipping this important protocol further demonstrates how *the whole Council* was desperate and obsessed with convicting *Him*.

The Bible gives no indication of anyone speaking on defense of *Jesus* during His religious trials. In fact, a great irony is that if we include His civil trial before the Romans, the only person who tries to defend *Jesus* at all is Pilate, the Roman governor (Luke 23:4).

False Testimony is making a statement about someone that is known by the speaker to be untrue. Giving *false testimony* broke the ten commandments delivered by Moses:

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”
(Exodus 20:16)

The whole Council was continually *trying to obtain false testimony* that was *against Jesus* and would be condemning *against Him*. Their efforts *to obtain* this were a major violation of Jewish judicial law [Rule 11: False Witnesses]. *The whole Sanhedrin Council* was guilty of breaking the ninth commandment. *The whole Council's* deceit fulfilled the Messianic prophecy of Psalm 116 which says: “I am greatly afflicted... All men are liars” (Psalm 116:10-11).

The reason *the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus* was because *they* had no charge sufficient to convict *Jesus* of breaking [Rule 7: Lack of a Charge] and *they* had no evidence that *Jesus* had committed a crime of any sort, much less one worthy of *death* [Rule 9: Lack of Evidence]. Therefore, *they* needed *to obtain false testimony against Jesus so that they might put Him to death*.

Matthew says: *They did not find any false testimony* that was substantial enough to make their charges *against Jesus* stick, *even though many false witnesses came forward* (v 60a).

For the conviction to be valid, Jewish law required at least two credible witnesses to agree in all the relevant details regarding the accused and the crime that was said to have been committed.

The lack of preparation and direction was on full display as *many false witnesses* came forward but could not keep their stories straight for their charge to stick. *Even though* they were saying *false testimony against Him*, their lies did *not* agree. This further indicates that *the chief priests and the whole Council* were not expecting to put *Jesus* on trial at this time, until Judas came to warn them that *Jesus* knew of their plot.

Their slanderous efforts fulfilled multiple prophecies from Psalm 35. This entire psalm originally described how David the psalmist cried out to the LORD for vindication when he was maliciously and falsely accused, even as it prophesied how the Messiah would be similarly slandered by His enemies before His vindication.

Here are some of the things David wrote about himself and prophesied concerning the Messiah in Psalm 35 that were fulfilled during *Jesus's* religious trials:

“Malicious witnesses rise up;
They ask me of things that I do not know.
They repay me evil for good,
To the bereavement of my soul.”
(Psalm 35:11-12)

“But at my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered themselves together;
The smiters whom I did not know gathered together against me,
They slandered me without ceasing.
Like godless jesters at a feast,
They gnashed at me with their teeth.”
(Psalm 35:15-16)

“For they do not speak peace,
But they devise deceitful words against those who are quiet in the land.
They opened their mouth wide against me;
They said, ‘Aha, aha, our eyes have seen it!’”
(Psalm 35:20-21)

After *many false witnesses*, Matthew tells us, *later on two came forward* (v 60b) whose *false* testimonies were similar enough for the rigged *Council* to probe, but materially different in the relevant particulars to convict. (More on these differences in just a moment).

The possible charge of *Jesus’s* alleged *blasphemy* against *the temple* likely intrigued *the Council*, because crimes against *the temple* was the one area where Rome granted the Jews the authority to enforce capital punishment. If they could convict *Jesus* of such a crime, then there would be no need to trouble themselves trying to convince Pilate to convict and sentence *Him to death* for breaking a Roman law. Any path that could avoid this unnecessary complication and delay would have been appealing to the Jewish authorities.

We can see the similarities and the key differences between these *two false witnesses* by comparing Matthew’s Gospel account with Mark’s.

Matthew appears to write what one of the *two false witnesses* said:

“*This man stated, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days’*” (v 61).

Mark appears to write what the other *false witness* said:

““We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’”
(Mark 14:58)

Mark then adds the comment, “Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent” (Mark 14:59).

The accusations of these *two false witnesses* fixated on *the temple*. This was promising to the Sanhedrin. Crimes against *the temple* was the lone area in which Rome granted the Jews the authority of capital punishment. All other crimes with the penalty of execution at that time fell under Roman jurisdiction.

The conflicting, and therefore unusable, detail in their accounts was that one accuser testified that *Jesus said*: “I **am able** to destroy the temple” (Matthew 26:61), while the other testified that He *said*: “I **will destroy** this temple” (Mark 14:58). The specific charge these *two false witnesses* failed to corroborate was “Blasphemy against the temple.”

For the record, outside of the accounts of these *two false witnesses*, there is no evidence that *Jesus* ever *said* either of these statements. He did say, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). Notice how *Jesus* did not say that He would or could *destroy the temple*, but rather He claimed that He could raise it if it were destroyed.

Moreover, when He said this He was referring to His body as “this temple” (John 19:21). So it appears *the false witnesses* misquoted *Jesus* and tried to twist His statements into a capital offense. But even though they colluded to distort His words they still failed to produce evidence sufficient to justify convicting *Jesus*, “Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent” (Mark 14:59).

2. CAIAPHAS INTERVENES

(Matthew 26:62-63)

The rigged trial *against Jesus* was getting nowhere and time was quickly running out to condemn *Him to death*. Failure to convict, after marshalling a Roman cohort (John 18:3) and gathering *the whole Council* in the personal home of *the high priest* in the middle of Passover night would not only be humiliating, but potentially disastrous for Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.

Caiaphas’s position as *high priest*, the public trust, and the Roman backing of *the Council* were at stake, according to their own assessment (John 11:48). Apart from a conviction, it would be hard to imagine how Caiaphas, or the Sanhedrin, would be able to recover from such a scandal. Failure to convict *Jesus* was not an option for them. But despite their best, twisted efforts—failure was the very outcome now staring them in the face.

It was at this moment that Caiaphas intervened:

The high priest stood up and said to Him, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” (v 62).

Even though many false witnesses came forward to testify against Jesus, the high priest still had no evidence to condemn Him to death. So instead of ending the trial that corruptly began in search of a capital offense that did not exist by means of false testimony, Caiaphas now attempted to stage a capital offense by coaxing Jesus into saying something he could twist into a capital offense.

In addressing *Jesus*, the accused, in this way, *the high priest* was breaking several Jewish laws at once:

1. [Rule 2: Neutrality] A magistrate cannot be the prosecution arguing for conviction and also be a neutral judge who dispassionately weighs all the evidence for the same case. Any man who assumes both roles for the same case is unable to “do no injustice in judgment...[or to be able] to judge [his] neighbor fairly” (Leviticus 19:15). By acting as a prosecutor, the high priest disqualified himself from presiding as *Jesus*’s judge.
2. [Rule 12: Improper Prosecution] A judge is supposed to ensure that the trial is run according to the law to ensure justice. And according to Jewish law, this meant evaluating evidence from *witnesses*. After the *witnesses* failed to bring any legitimate evidence against *Jesus*, a fair judge would have ended the trial with an acquittal. But instead of doing this, Caiaphas intervened and tried to manufacture evidence against *Jesus* while He was in court. The courtroom is the place to weigh cases of possible crimes. It is not supposed to be a place that tries to stage a crime so that a conviction can follow. But this is exactly what *the high priest* did.
3. [Rule 13: Forced Self-Incrimination] Caiaphas’s harassment of *Jesus* was another violation of Jewish legal law. The accused could not be asked to testify against himself in the Jewish court of law. Moreover, even if the accused did testify against himself in a capital case, his testimony was considered invalid according to the Jewish legal code.

But Jesus kept silent (v 63a).

Jesus exercised His rights under Jewish law. It was up to the prosecution to prove *His* guilt. And they had failed to do so even with all their *false testimony*. *Jesus* was under no legal obligation to respond. In keeping *silent*, *Jesus* obeyed the Jewish judicial protocols because the accused was not allowed to speak for or against himself in cases involving capital offenses. *He* was both completely innocent and shrewdly silent in the midst of wolves (Matthew 10:16).

It was ironic that the accused was following the law, while the judge (*the high priest*) was breaking it and trying to trick the defendant (*Jesus*) into breaking it so that he could convict *Him*.

Jesus’s silence was in submission to His Father (Matthew 26:39; Luke 22:42). He did not protest. He did not seek to take out His own justice against His false accusers. He did not even point out *the Council*’s blatant unfairness and disregard for their own laws. *Jesus kept silent*.

Jesus remained steadfast to complete the mission on which He was sent—to intercede “for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12) and to “justify the many [and] bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11)—“to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28)—“that [the LORD’s] salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6).

Instead of protesting, *Jesus kept silent* and fulfilled Isaiah’s Messianic prophecies:

“He will not cry out or raise His voice.”
(Isaiah 42:2)

“like a sheep that is silent before its shearers...He did not open His mouth.”
(Isaiah 53:7)

And *Jesus kept silent* and despised the shame (Hebrews 12:2) knowing that He would soon be vindicated by His Father, and that those who contended against *Him* would be forgotten (Isaiah 50:8-9) and that His reward would be great (Isaiah 53:12).

After *Jesus* did not respond to Caiaphas’s question regarding *the false* accusations *against Him*, *the high priest* then put *Jesus* under oath.

And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God” (v 63).

The phrase—*I adjure You*—is a way a plaintiff can put someone under oath and legally enforce their cooperation in providing testimony. To add weight to the oath the high priest was putting *Jesus* under, Caiaphas invoked *the living God*, the highest being in the Universe, who also happened to be the Man he was condemning.

The question *the high priest* adjured *Jesus* to answer before *the Council* was whether He was *the Christ* and/or *the Son of God*. The term, *Christ*, means “Messiah.” *Christ* is the transliteration of the Greek word, Χριστός (G5547—pronounced “khris-tos”). *Kristos* is the Greek word for the Hebrew term מָשִׁיחַ (H4899—pronounced “maw-shee'-akh”). “Mawsheeahk” means “anointed one” and is transliterated as “Messiah.” In other words, *the high priest* was compelling *Jesus* to truthfully say *whether* or not *He* was the Messiah.

Caiaphas was apparently aware that *Jesus* acted as though *He* was the *Christ/Messiah*. He was also aware that the term—*Son of God*—was used to describe *the Christ/Messiah*.

Jesus was *the Christ, the Son of God* (Matthew 16:16).

But *the high priest* was not interested in the truth [Rule 15: Ignoring the Evidence]. He was only interested in getting *Jesus* to say something he could twist into a condemnation. Caiaphas felt that *Jesus* would give him this kind of response. And to ensure that he got an answer, *the high priest* compelled *Jesus* to speak—*I adjure You to tell us*.

Caiaphas hoped that if he could force *Jesus* to reveal the despised truth about His identity before the hostile Sanhedrin, then He would be condemned *to death*. *The high priest’s* treacherous hopes would come to fruition.

Also of ironic interest is the fact that Matthew refers to Caiaphas in this passage by means of his recognized title, which was: *high priest*. Caiaphas was a corrupt *high priest*. But *Jesus*, as the Messiah, who is in the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4) is our perfect and everlasting *High Priest* (Hebrews 5:8-10, 7:23-28).

3. JESUS CONFESSES HIS IDENTITY

(Matthew 26:64)

Having been put under oath, *Jesus* answered *the high priest*. In His response, *Jesus* truthfully confessed His identity.

Jesus said to him, “*You have said it yourself*” (v 64a).

This expression is a Jewish way of affirmatively answering the asker’s question. It answers the question by recalling the words of the question. When *Jesus* answered Caiaphas’s question with the expression *You have said it yourself*, *Jesus* was admitting that He was *the Christ/Messiah* and *the Son of God*. He was also telling Caiaphas, “*You said* these words about Me”; implying that the reason *the high priest* was asking *Jesus* this question was because he feared that it was true.

In saying this, *Jesus* confessed that *He* was *the Christ/Messiah* and *the Son of God*.

Mark captures *Jesus*’s confession to these things a little differently. Mark records *Jesus*’s response to the high priest’s demand simply as: “I am” (Mark 14:62).

This short and simple answer could be Mark’s way of summarizing *Jesus*’s meaning for his Roman audience. It is possible Mark may have boiled down *Jesus*’s Jewish expression, *You have said it yourself*, that affirms His identity in a way that was more clearly understood by the Romans who appreciate blunt simplicity. (Matthew, who was writing to the Jews, kept the Jewishness of *Christ*’s answer.)

But it also possible that *Jesus* said (and meant) both of these things in His reply to *the high priest*’s question; and that Matthew and Mark each chose the response to suit their respective audiences. If so, then *Jesus*’s short and simple answer: “I am” recorded in Mark 14:62 has a double-meaning worth explaining.

On the surface the expression “I am” directly answered *the high priest*’s question with a short “Yes.” *Jesus* just confessed, “I am *the Christ/Messiah* and *the Son God*.” But *He* also confessed this by invoking the sacred name of “YAHWEH”—the name *God* used for Himself when *He* revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14).

The Jews considered it blasphemous to speak *God*’s name. If *Jesus* answered with this expression, *He* not only spoke *God*’s name, but *He* did so while claiming to be *God*. This would have been a blasphemous thing to say for anyone who was not *God*. But the Council, who was *against Him*, never investigated this claim. *They* simply presumed *He* was not *God*.

When *Jesus* told *the high priest*: “*You have said it yourself*,” He knew that neither Caiaphas nor *the Council* would believe *Him* or accept His answer. So, after affirming His identity as *the Christ/Messiah* and *the Son of God*, *Jesus* elaborated upon His response.

Jesus said to him, “*You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven*” (v 64).

The expression *nevertheless I tell you* is *Jesus's* acknowledgement that what *He* just *said* and is about to *tell* His accusers will not be accepted as true.

The term: *Son of Man* was a clear Messianic term. It was one that *Jesus* often used to describe Himself.

(To learn more about the meaning of this term, see The Bible Says article: [“Son of Man”](#))

The term: *right hand of Power*; is a reference to *God* and His throne.

Jesus was claiming that one day *the high priest and the whole Council* would see *Him* as the Messiah *sitting* in *God's* throne room at *God's right hand*. And what's more, *Jesus* said that *they* will see *Him* coming from *heaven* to judge and rule the earth *on the clouds of heaven*.

This elaboration was an explicit reference to well established Messianic prophecies in Daniel regarding a powerful vision of the Ancient of Days and *the Son of Man*.

“I kept looking
Until thrones were set up,
And the Ancient of Days took His seat;
His vesture was like white snow
And the hair of His head like pure wool.
His throne was ablaze with flames,
Its wheels were a burning fire.

“A river of fire was flowing”
And coming out from before Him;
Thousands upon thousands were attending Him,
And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him;
The court sat,
And the books were opened.”
(Daniel 7:9-10)

Daniel also prophesied:

“I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.”
(Daniel 7:13)

Regarding *the Son of Man*, Daniel described:

“And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion

Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.”
(Daniel 7:14)

Jesus offered this future event as the final proof of His claims.

He knew that *God* will vindicate Him (Isaiah 50:7-9). *God* will exalt Him in due time (Isaiah 52:13, 53:12; Philippians 2:9). *The high priest and the whole Council* will know *Jesus* is *the Christ, the Son of God* when *they* see this happen. *They* too will confess *Jesus* is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11) when *they* see these things. But if *they* do not believe *Jesus* during their lives and *they* condemn *Him to death*, *they* will condemn themselves (John 3:18). At that point, it will be too late for them to escape the consequences of their unbelief and rejection of *Jesus* as *the Christ, the Son of God* unharmed.

Jesus's response and elaboration to *the high priest's* demand to *tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God* was direct, unmistakable, and completely true.

But it was also the kind of response Caiaphas was hoping to elicit. Not only did *Jesus* clearly and undeniably claim to be *the Christ/Messiah* and *the Son of God*, *He* did so with a juicy elaboration.

4. CAIAPHAS'S CHARGE

(Matthew 26:65-66a)

Caiaphas pounced. With this statement, *the high priest* acted as though *Jesus* just committed the crime of *blasphemy*.

Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed!" (v 65).

The tearing of garments was a sign of powerful emotion such as grief, mourning, and terrible lament. Relatives would tear the clothes they wore upon learning of a loved one's death. But *the high priest* was forbidden to tear *his robes* (Leviticus 21:10b). *The high priest's robes* were considered holy as *the temple* was considered holy (Exodus 39:41). The Bible does not grant any allowance for *the high priest* to tear *his robes*.

The genuineness of Caiaphas's emotional outburst—which expressed profound sorrow—is highly questionable given the urgency with which he was desperately trying to condemn *Jesus*. Given the situation, it seems more likely that he was ecstatic that *Jesus* finally said something which he could twist into a condemnation, however unlawfully. Therefore, his actions seem to be hypocritical and fake.

But whether he was genuine or not, this action was forbidden to his office as *high priest* according to the Law of Moses. Ironically, by tearing *his* holy garments in a display of outrage, Caiaphas appears to have committed the same crime that he and the Sanhedrin had been trying to condemn *Jesus* of for the past hour or more—*Blasphemy* against the Holy things of *God's temple* [Rule 14: Blasphemy].

Moreover, up until this point in the entire conspiracy against *Jesus*, His enemies never had a specific charge they were able to prove with which to condemn Him [Rule 7: Lack of a Charge]. But at this moment, Caiaphas manufactured one [Rule 11 False Witness]. And it was *the high priest* himself who initiated the charge [Rule 2: Neutrality; Rule 12: Improper Prosecution]. As *Jesus's* judge, all of these things were against judicial protocol for him to do.

But for *the high priest*, his law breaking was irrelevant. *Caiaphas's* judicial theatrics were an attempt to condemn *Jesus* on the basis of emotions and a political stunt, not the rule of law. The only thing that mattered to him was getting a conviction that would *put Jesus to death*.

To this end, Caiaphas asked *the Council*: “*What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?*” (v 65b-66a).

Caiaphas's comments to the Sanhedrin Council: “*What further need do we have of witnesses?*” had an intended meaning of “*You have heard this blasphemy yourselves and now it is time to condemn Jesus for it.*”

But it also had another (and perhaps unintended) meaning: “*Why do we need to follow the Law which requires two witnesses and forbids judges from being witnesses in the trials they adjudicate?*”

Caiaphas's rhetorical question was the equivalent of him announcing that they did not need any legal evidence to convict *Jesus* [Rule 9: Lack of Evidence].

The high priest's follow up statement: *Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?* was asking them to set aside judicial standards for the sake of condemning *Jesus*. *The high priest* was instructing *the Council* to serve as their own witnesses in the case they were deciding—which Jewish law forbid them to do [Rule 2: Neutrality; Rule 12: Improper Prosecution (a judge could not serve as a witness)].

The high priest, who was supposed to be the guardian and personification of order in the courtroom, was behaving hysterically and asking the Sanhedrin to disregard the laws they were to follow.

What's more, no one present among *the whole Council* was willing to weigh the evidence of *Jesus's* claim [Rule 15: Ignoring the Evidence]. The evidence in support of *Jesus* as the Messiah was available to them. The evidence supporting His claim includes:

- His virtue in regard to the Law of Moses (Matthew 5:17)
- His numerous signs and miracles which validated His claim (John 5:36)
- His fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies (John 5:39)

Such evidence, if considered, could have shown them that *Jesus* is who He claimed to be. However, these Jewish leaders blindly assumed that *Jesus blasphemed*, because that was their predetermined conclusion [Rule 3: Rigged]. They had prejudged that *Jesus* could not be who He claimed to be. This conclusion was based on their arrogant pride, bitter resentment, and blind hatred of *Jesus*.

5. THE VERDICT

(Matthew 26:66b)

Without weighing any evidence in Jesus's favor or regarding the Law *they* so highly prized, the Sanhedrin *Council* answered their *high priest*: *He deserves death!* (Matthew 26:66b).

In one fell swoop, Caiaphas had successfully persuaded *the Council* to condemn *Jesus* in a frenzied rage with little regard for the Law.

After lengthy interrogations, *many false witnesses*, and illegal improvisations; an unplanned, disorganized, secret trial based on a verdict without a crime finally achieved its wicked goal.

Mark explicitly states that the verdict was unanimous (as Matthew implies):

“They **all** condemned Him to be deserving of death.”

(Mark 14:64)

The unanimous verdict was a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that no one would protest the way *the Christ/Messiah* would be oppressed at His trial or unjustly *put to death*:

“By oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered (i.e. ‘no one complained’)
That He was cut off out of the land of the living.”

(Isaiah 53:8a)

The unanimous verdict also prophetically fulfilled the Messianic psalm:

“I said in my alarm,
‘All men are liars.’”

(Psalm 116:11)

The Council's response broke at least three more laws:

- [Rule 8: Lack of Defense]
- [Rule 16: Faulty Verdict]
- [Rule 17: Hasty Sentence]

First (and once again), no one spoke in defense of Jesus or said a word in favor of *His* case.

Second, unlike many Western judicial codes which require all its jury trials to be decided unanimously, according to the Jewish legal code, any guilty verdict that was unanimous automatically triggered the defendant's acquittal [Rule 16: Faulty Verdict].

Jewish verdicts required guilty convictions to be decided by a majority of two or more judges—but not unanimously. At least one judge must decide in favor of the defendant. This was for two reasons:

1. An element of mercy had to be present in every judicial deliberation (Exodus 34:5-7; Zechariah 7:9).
2. The Jews also felt that a unanimous conviction suggested that there was a conspiracy against the defendant because judges announced their verdict one at a time, starting with the youngest. If all twenty-three (or more) judges independently voted guilty it implied collusion.

The verdict was faulty not only because of the unanimous vote. It also does not seem to have been conducted in an orderly and independent way as the law required. There is no record of the vote being taken one by one. Rather the scene Matthew and Mark describe suggest that it was shouted all at once in a frenzy of rage.

The verdict and sentence seem to be taken together, when they should have been deliberated and decided separately. In cases involving capital punishment, Jewish law clearly required a *death* sentence to be delivered the day after finding the defendant guilty. In *Jesus's* religious trials they not only are not delivered with the requisite day between the conviction of guilt and condemnation of *death*; both were improperly delivered together in the same instance [Rule 17: Hasty Sentence].

Though the Sanhedrin failed to convict *Jesus* of blaspheming the temple which would have afforded them the luxury of avoiding a Roman trial and conviction in order to have *Him put to death*, they still produced the sentence *they* desired.

However, because this trial took place in the middle of the night and in the home of Caiaphas, it had no semblance of legality. Therefore, another religious trial would be needed before *they* could send *Jesus* to Pilate. But *they* would have to wait until it was morning before *Jesus's* official religious trial could begin in the sanctioned court room on the temple grounds (Matthew 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71).

In that trial they would use the same arguments as this one to produce a speedy conviction. In the meantime, *they* had to prepare new, civil arguments that would convince the Roman governor Pilate that *Jesus* was a criminal deserving *death*.

For a detailed explanation of the principles that were broken during *Jesus's* trial, see The Bible Says article: [Jesus's Trial, Part 4. The Judicial Principles That Were Violated.](#)

For a detailed explanation of the other laws that were broken during *Jesus's* trial, see The Bible Says article: [Jesus's Trial, Part 5. The Laws Of Practice That Were Violated.](#)

Biblical Text

59 Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. 60 They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, 61 and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.'" 62 The high priest stood up and said to Him, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" 63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." 64

Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” 65 Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; 66 what do you think?” They answered, “He deserves death!”