
“You Have Said It Yourself”

*“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.’ 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’”
(Matthew 26:63b, 64).*

Caiaphas, the high priest, and the Sanhedrin had focused their judicial strength on convicting Jesus of a crime worthy of death, but they were failing miserably. The false witnesses they had brought in had contradicted each other and had proven worthless, throwing Caiaphas' hall into confusion. Finally, two of them gave a sinister interpretation to a statement our Lord had made at the temple regarding His death. Literalizing His figurative words, they said, “This man stated, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days’” (Matthew 26:61). However, Caiaphas knew that this kind of information, even when given the worst possible meaning, would carry little weight with Pilate, the Roman governor.

When the two witnesses brought up Jesus' temple statement, desperate Caiaphas cried out to Jesus, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” (Matthew 26:62). His tone and intensity revealed his frustration at being unable to find any evidence against Him. Instead of pronouncing Jesus innocent, as a credible high priest would have done, he groped forward, hoping Jesus would convict Himself by trying to answer the baseless charges that were being thrown at Him. To the high priest's chagrin, “Jesus kept silent” (Matthew 26:63a). His silence brought a thunderous rebuke to the trial! Caiaphas' murderous plan was being thwarted by silence! The evidence he had managed to fabricate was not worthy of even a word of defense from Jesus. With a dignity born of perfect righteousness, Jesus said nothing.

The high priest had no more options. He would have to twist the truth, making it seem to those who were present that Jesus was a diabolical, conniving blasphemer. Evidence of blasphemy would not convince Rome, but it would persuade the Sanhedrin that Jesus should be put to death, keeping the scandalous trial alive.

Advancing his vile intention and feigning the appearance of being the savior of his nation, Caiaphas said to Jesus, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God” (Matthew 26:63b). In response to being placed under an oath before God (Leviticus 5:1), Jesus announced who He was. Now, He would be silent about nothing. The first part of His sentence, an affirmation, comprised a terse, pointed reply: “You have said it yourself” (Matthew 26:64a). Mark depicted Him as saying, “I am” (Mark 14:62a). Maybe this was a part of His answer that Matthew did not include. His original affirmation may have been “You have said it yourself, I am.” Another possibility is that Mark translated the idiomatic expression “You have said it yourself” for his Roman readers with the two words “I am.” Jesus was making Himself absolutely clear: He, the Son of God, was presenting the court with the truth about His deity. Jesus did not stop with His affirmation of who He was; He added a confirmatory promise: “Nevertheless I tell you,” He said, “hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64b). He was, is, and

always will be the Christ, God's Son. Nothing—not even crucifixion—could remove Him or change Him. Caiaphas had Jesus before him in this hall, not realizing that he would someday stand before Jesus for judgment!

Caiaphas and his colleagues may have understood "the Christ" designation to mean the Son of David who would restore the kingdom to Israel, and they may have perceived the "Son of God" title to mean the chosen servant of God. Their view of the Messiah probably did not include the idea that the coming One was the second member of the Godhead, God the Son. Jesus was giving them a new definition of these terms. In His answer, He prophesied that, in the distant future, they would see Him—the One they were planning to crucify—sitting on the right hand of God and coming on the clouds of heaven, bringing in eternal judgment. Using descriptions drawn from Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 110, which these learned scribes and elders no doubt recognized, Jesus foretold that one day they would see Him as the Judge sent by the Father. If this august assembly had paid attention to what Jesus was saying, they would have concluded that this One whom they were judging would someday be their eternal Judge.

In a few words—one extended, majestic sentence spoken to Caiaphas and the Council members—Jesus gave a panoramic view of who He was.

He publicly, boldly, and clearly declared that He was the Christ, the anointed One of God. Jesus did not begin His ministry proclaiming this truth. In fact, in those early days, He asked those who were healed by Him to be quiet about His identity. His Messiahship was to be kept a secret until the right time. He had much groundwork to lay and many foundational truths to teach before making public this truth of who He was. Many were eager to welcome the kingdom, but Jesus' preparatory work required time. This trial before Caiaphas was the time He had chosen to announce to the world who He was. Choosing this setting and circumstance, He said to Caiaphas, "You have said it yourself!"

He further affirmed that He was the Son of God. Even though Caiaphas may not have known fully what he was asking Jesus with his loaded

question, Jesus answered him on the high level of divine truth. Knowing that the Old Testament condemned blasphemy, Caiaphas jumped on Jesus' answer with a death pronouncement. He tore his robes as a gesture of shock and said, "He has blasphemed!" He then turned to the Council members and demanded, "What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?" A chorus of weak-willed men croaked, "He deserves death!" (Matthew 26:65, 66).

Caiaphas and his religious colleagues had overlooked one all-important fact: One is not guilty of blasphemy if he is telling the truth! Jesus stated that He was the Son of God because that was the only truthful answer that could be given to Caiaphas' question! Caiaphas was trying the Son of God, not an imposter!

In addition, Jesus pictured Himself as the great, eternal Judge who would come in the clouds of heaven. His words must be a figurative prophecy that extended to His resurrection, to the establishment of the church, to the spread of the gospel, to the judgment that would fall upon Jerusalem when Titus destroyed it in A.D. 70, and on to the eternal judgment at the end of time. Daniel saw a vision of the Son of Man receiving the kingdom and executing the decrees of the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:13, 14). Jesus used the terminology of that vision in a way that identified Him as the fulfillment of those prophecies—the One who was, is, and is to come. He was telling Caiaphas that He was the Christ, the Son of God, and the coming Judge.

Jesus' answer to Caiaphas' question is only one sentence, yet it is packed with three of the greatest truths about Him. When His statement is conjoined with the miracles that He worked, the supernatural teaching that He brought, the resurrection from the dead that He would experience, and all the other confirmatory evidence for His veracity, His words must be accepted as conveying the unchanging truth about Him. After hearing His words, no one can misunderstand His identity.

The trial in the hall of Caiaphas was the setting, the moment in history, which Jesus had chosen for His announcement. This acknowledgment of His deity was the first time during

His earthly life that He announced concretely, concisely, and publicly the truth about Himself. His words made it clear what was taking place. He was saying, "Do you know whom you are crucifying? You are rejecting your Messiah, the Son of God, your Judge, and are joining disobediently with the lawless hands that will put Him on the cross!" In addition, His words contained a plea to each sinful heart that was present: "Will you not think about what you are doing? Will you not see the singular significance of what is taking place here? You are not only crucifying Me, but you are also sealing your own destiny."

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What happened before Caiaphas spotlights the drama between good and evil that transpired during the journey to the cross. Man, the sinner who desperately needs salvation, used deceit, sophistry, and hypocrisy to put his Savior to death. The spiritual leaders who orchestrated His trials sided with the devil and did his work, posing as great men of God. We must never forget the lesson that they teach us: We can talk and sing about the truth, wear the garb of truth, and claim we are the people of truth; yet, when we come face to face with the personification of truth, we can still crucify our Lord as if we had no interest in the truth at all.