



## ***St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)***

**Worship Address :** Cerritos High School Auditorium  
12500 E. 183<sup>rd</sup> St., Cerritos, CA 90703  
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

**Mailing Address :** 11428 E. Artesia Blvd. # 4 ; Artesia, CA 90701  
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May 10, 2009

**Theme: Jesus On Trial**

**Text: Matthew 26:57-67**

We have come to the point of Matthew's account of Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin. Matthew's account of Jesus' trial makes it clear that Jesus' trial was unjust because it violated a number of principles that had been developed on the basis of Torah. Jesus had pronounced a just judgment upon the religious leadership of Israel. He was now to be judged unjustly by them. The Gospels tell us that Jesus was put on trial three times: (1) He was tried once before part of the Sanhedrin at nighttime. (2) He was tried a second time before the full Sanhedrin as soon as it was day, according to Luke. (3) He was put on trial before Pilate. This was because the Jews wanted a death sentence. Roman law did not permit the Jews to carry out executions.

Because it was still dark, we may conclude that only part of the Sanhedrin was present. Still, three groups were present: the High Priest and the Chief Priests; the scribes; and the elders of the people. This last group may have included Pharisees. None of the Gospels gives us a detailed account of Jesus' trial. But if we study all four of them, we find a general pattern. (1) First, He is taken to a man named Annas. Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the High Priest at the time. Annas did not hold any formal office at this time. But He was once the High Priest. He still had a great deal of influence over the affairs of the temple. (2) Then Jesus was taken before some members of the Sanhedrin. (3) There He was charged with blasphemy. (4) As soon as it was day, He was taken before an assembly of the full Sanhedrin, where He was formally charged and convicted and sentenced to death. (5) Then He was taken before Pilate, who pronounced the death sentence upon Him.

In the previous section, Matthew has told us that when Jesus was arrested, all the disciples ran away. We might ask where the church got its information about Jesus' trial. John's Gospel tells us that one of Jesus' disciples was known to the high priest. This disciple went with Jesus into the courtyard of Caiaphas' mansion. He gained permission for Peter to enter also. Matthew tells us that Peter followed at a distance. Commentators have often used this fact to criticize Peter. If He had followed closely, they say, He would not have denied Jesus later. But the fact that Peter followed Jesus at all after his arrest shows that He had a certain amount of courage. However, if we remember the account of Gethsemane, we remember that rather than praying with Jesus, Peter fell asleep. He had courage, but it was only human courage. It was courage that was not supported by God's power. When his courage was put to the test, it fell to pieces and He denied that He even knew Jesus. If He had spent the time in prayer, things may have been different. This teaches us the importance of prayer. Sometimes prayers bring about changes in our



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world. But the most important purpose of prayer is that it makes changes in us. If Peter had prayed, his courage would have been supported by God's power.

Matthew says that the "whole" Sanhedrin tried to find false evidence against Jesus. This must be recognized as a generalization. In other words, the vast majority of those who were assembled tried to do so. We know from the Gospels of Luke and John that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus did not agree with the majority. Jesus is on trial for his life. Many false charges are brought against him. Even so, Jesus remains silent. We can make two observations about His silence. (1) It is another fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy about the Suffering Servant of Yahweh: "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to his slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." (2) Jesus remained silent because He could easily have answered all of the false charges that were brought against Him. During his ministry, no one was ever able to win a verbal battle with him concerning spiritual matters. Jesus could have talked his way out of His crucifixion. But He is committed to the will of God and the fulfillment of Scripture. He is committed to obey God.

Finally the High Priest himself asks Jesus whether He is not going to answer. Jesus still remains silent. Then the High Priest puts Jesus under oath before God to tell the truth in answer to this charge: "I charge you under oath be the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." At last Jesus answers—and as He has always done during his life, He tells the truth with this response, "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." The High priest tears his robe and finds him guilty of blasphemy. The rest of the assembly agrees and Jesus' suffering begins. They begin to spit in His face and to mock Him and strike Him with their fists. This begins what theologians call, "The Humiliation of the Christ." We can rejoice because it was Jesus' humiliation which bought our salvation.