

*The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 18 January 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.*

## **The Right Hand of Power**

### **Matthew 26:57-68**

When my wife and I were traveling around America in the first year of our marriage, there were times when we would see an episode or two of an American TV program called “Judge Judy.” If you’ve never heard of Judge Judy, she is a judge in a small claims court in Manhattan; and her courtroom sessions are televised nationwide. Everyone loves to see Judge Judy in action, because she has a fiery personality, and razor-sharp perception. As she grills the plaintiff and the defendant, she quickly finds any inconsistencies in their stories. Of course, the inconsistencies are often on the part of the defendant; but sometimes, they are on the part of the plaintiff. The plaintiff may have witnesses to back up his story; but if there be any inconsistencies between their testimonies, Judge Judy sniffs them out within minutes, with the precision of a bloodhound. The plaintiff starts to stammer, and look foolish; and at that point, you know that he’s on his way down! The next thing you know, Judge Judy is giving the plaintiff a tongue-lashing for his dishonesty. The gavel comes down; the defendant is vindicated; and the case is dismissed. Why? Because the stories didn’t match.

Of course, small claims courts are very different from criminal courts, and the stakes are far more serious; but when it comes to evidence, the principles are the same in any court of law. Generally, there must be more than one witness for an accusation to have credibility; and the testimonies must match. Otherwise, the case is usually thrown out. Where did this idea come from? From the Bible! In the Old Testament Law, God commanded that *no one* was to be sentenced to death because of the testimony of only one witness: there had to be at least two witnesses. It didn’t matter how serious the alleged crime was: the stories had to match, or else the accused went free.

Yet, such was not the case in the trial of Jesus of Nazareth. His accusers’ testimonies did *not* agree; yet, Jesus was condemned to death. Why? Because this was *their* hour, and the **“power of darkness.”** It was now time for Satan to bruise Jesus’ heel. However, it was only an “hour” (a very brief time); and the “power” was merely *granted* to Satan by God. *God* was in control all along. The fact is that after 2,000 years, no one knows the names of Jesus’ accusers. In contrast, nearly every soul on earth knows the name of Jesus of Nazareth; and *His* testimony has been proven true by the most awesome and incontestable miracle in history—the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ from the dead! This morning, we will examine Jesus’ testimony, and what it means for us. The title of this message is ***The Right Hand of Power.***

## I. The Sanhedrin's accusations against Jesus (vv. 57-61)

Only an hour or so before Christ's arrest, Christ had informed Peter that that very night, he would deny three times that he even knew Him. Peter, of course, couldn't believe that he would ever do such a thing; and he boldly declared, "**Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.**" However, when the hour of trial arrived, Peter was *not* ready to go to prison and to death. He certainly wasn't planning to *submit* calmly to arrest, as his Master was doing. First, he tried to smite his enemies with a sword; and then, he fled—as did all the disciples. The courage that Peter *thought* he had instantly evaporated, because he was doing everything in the power of his flesh, and in his own wisdom. He hadn't spent that "sweet hour of prayer" with the Lord; and he wasn't prepared.

However, shortly after Jesus was led away, Peter did manage to regain some composure. Perhaps, as Peter reflected on how miraculous it was that he had *not* been arrested, he mustered just enough faith to believe that God *really would* shield him from arrest (just as Jesus had said). And so, he decided to follow the soldiers at a safe distance. John followed the mob, as well. In fact, John even had enough courage to go into Caiaphas's house—whereas Peter stayed out in the courtyard, where the servants were gathered around the fire.

Now, it is no exaggeration to say that literally *everything* about Jesus' trial was grossly illegal! First, it was illegal to conduct a nighttime trial. By the Sanhedrin's own laws, it was illegal to conduct a trial between sunset and sunrise.<sup>1</sup> Everything had to be done transparently, and in the light. This is a biblical principle, which the rabbis had made into a law. Yet, they broke their own law that night. It wasn't the only law they broke, either. Another law they broke was that of sending Jesus to the house of Annas.<sup>2</sup> The Bible doesn't give us much information about this; but in **John 18**, we are told that the soldiers first took Jesus to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest. (Annas was the one who really ran the show from behind the scenes.) It appears that Annas did a private examination of Jesus before sending Him on to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin; and if so, this was illegal. It was also illegal to hold a trial for a capital crime on the day before the Sabbath, or before any Feast Day.<sup>3</sup> It was now officially the Passover Day (which, of course, was a feast day); and it was also the eve of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—which was both a feast *and* a High Sabbath day.

Yet, this still isn't all. The Bible says that the Sanhedrin "**sought**" for "**false witnesses**" against Jesus. They actually *paid* people to give false testimony against Jesus. Obviously, this was against the law, too. By the way, how did *Matthew* know that the witnesses were bribed? He probably received the information from **Nicodemus** and **Joseph of Arimathea**, who were both Sanhedrin members, and friends of Jesus. Though they evidently were not present for the

trial that evening, they must have gathered intelligence about these bribed “witnesses” later on.

Now, giving false witness, and hiring false witnesses, was serious business—both according to rabbinic law, and *God’s* Law. In **Deuteronomy 19:18-19**, God said that ***“If the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother.”*** (In other words, if you testify falsely against someone in order to have him put to death, then *you* should be put to death!) Yet, the Sanhedrin didn’t fear to trample on God’s Law. We don’t know how many false witnesses were summoned; but there must have been quite a few people who were willing to be bribed. Matthew says that ***“many false witnesses came.”*** However, the problem is that their testimonies were so obviously contradictory, that even the Sanhedrin couldn’t accept their testimonies, and still maintain any semblance of justice. These people’s “testimonies” were obviously a farce. Nonetheless, the Sanhedrin finally found two testimonies that were “good enough” to accept. Let’s look at their testimony again. **(Read Matthew 26:60-61.)**

These two witnesses were the “golden boys” that the religious leaders were looking for. In fact, their testimony became the template in the trial of Stephen, about a year or so later. In **Acts 6**, we find that in Stephen’s trial, Stephen’s accusers claimed that Stephen had blasphemed the Temple and the Law. According to them, Stephen had said that ***“Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place*** [meaning, “the Temple”], ***and shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us.”*** This is exactly what the witnesses in Jesus’ trial said about Jesus! Yet, their testimonies didn’t match with each other. Let’s see what other information we can find about these two witnesses, and their lying testimonies.

### **Mark 14:55-59**

When you compare this passage to **Matthew 26**, you can easily see the discrepancies between the witnesses’ testimonies. One man claimed that Jesus had said that He was ***“able”*** to destroy the Temple; but according to the other man, Jesus said that He ***“shall”*** destroy the Temple. That, in itself, is problematic. However, it gets worse. One man claimed that Jesus had used the words ***“made with hands,”*** and ***“made without hands,”*** in reference to the Temple—whereas the other man didn’t include these words at all. Also, one man said that Jesus had referred to the temple as the ***“temple of God,”*** whereas the other man didn’t include the words ***“of God.”*** Clearly, these testimonies didn’t line up. However, the worst part of all is that neither of these testimonies matched what *Jesus* had said. Let’s see what Jesus actually said.

### **John 2:18-22**

Do you see the huge discrepancy now? Jesus did not say, “I will destroy this temple”; rather, He said, “***Destroy this temple.***” The word “***destroy***” is imperative, second person, and plural. This means that Jesus was giving a command to His hearers. He was saying, “You (all of you) destroy this temple”! Jesus wasn’t saying that *He* would destroy the Temple: He was addressing the religious leaders, and *challenging them* to destroy “***this temple***”! Furthermore, Jesus did *not* use the words “***made with hands,***” “***made without hands,***” or “***of God.***” By adding those phrases, the witnesses made it appear that Jesus was speaking of the actual, wood-and-stone Temple in Jerusalem. But Jesus wasn’t speaking of the Temple at all: He was speaking of the “***temple of his body.***” He was prophesying that very soon, the rulers of Israel would destroy His body, but that after three days, He would raise Himself back to life again!

Now, we already know that these witnesses had been bribed by the council members. What about that phrase “***that is made with hands,***” then? Did the council members *instruct* the “witnesses” to add *those* words to their testimony? They very well may have! The Pharisees may actually have suspected, by this point, that Jesus had been speaking of His *body* when He made that prophecy. After all, Jesus had publicly said, many times, that He would soon be crucified, and after three days rise again. The Pharisees took that claim so seriously, that they requested Pilate to seal Jesus’ tomb, just to try to keep His resurrection from happening.

Now, whether the religious leaders really understood Jesus’ prediction about the “temple of His body” or not, one thing is certain: they did everything they could to make it appear that Jesus *wanted* to destroy the Temple of God! If they could make it appear that Jesus *wanted to destroy the Temple*, they could charge Him with blasphemy. They could even back up this claim by citing Jesus’ recent prophecy about the Temple. Only days earlier, Jesus had wept over Jerusalem, and had prophesied that the day was coming when their enemies would cast a trench around Jerusalem, and close them in on every side, and lay them even with the ground. Now, if the Pharisees *did*, in fact, use that prophecy as evidence against Jesus, then they were calling **the prophet Daniel** a blasphemer, too. You see, Jesus wasn’t prophesying anything new: He was merely expanding on what Daniel had prophesied 600 years earlier! In **Daniel 9:26**, Daniel prophesied that after Israel’s Messiah would be “***cut off***” (killed), “***the people of the prince that shall come***” would come and “***destroy the city and the sanctuary.***” In other words, Daniel prophesied that one day Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed, as God’s judgment upon Israel for murdering their own Messiah. Jesus was merely *affirming* what God had already said hundreds of years earlier, through the prophet Daniel.

The false testimonies had been given; and now, it was time for the accused to speak.

## II. Jesus’ affirmation of Messiahship (vv. 62-64)

**(Read Matthew 26:62-64.)** The “concerned citizens” had given their lying testimonies against Jesus; and now, the high priest stood up and demanded that Jesus answer these charges against Him. Now, this, in itself, was yet another violation of Jewish law. According to the Sanhedrin’s own law, the high priest was not to interrogate the accused person directly.<sup>4</sup> This law was undoubtedly meant to prevent corruption at the highest level. Clearly, though, there *was* corruption going on at the highest level; and no one said a word in protest.

Now, what was Jesus’ reaction? He had suffered indignity and injustice all night long; and now was His chance to say *something*. Yet, He said nothing. In **verse 63**, Matthew says that Jesus ***“held his peace.”*** This is the Hebrew way of saying, “He remained silent.” Jesus conducted Himself just as the prophet Isaiah had foretold, in **Isaiah 53:7**: ***“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”***

Now, silence is usually taken as a sign that someone is guilty. However, Jesus’ silence had just the opposite effect: it *emphasised* His innocence all the more. Everyone who saw Jesus in the courtroom that night could see the innocence in His face. It was the same way in Stephen’s trial. The Bible says that as the hired witnesses were making their false accusations against Stephen, ***“All the people that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.”*** If Stephen, who was a sinner, had such righteous character that his face looked angelic, imagine how innocent Jesus’ face must have looked! Being the sinless Son of God, His face radiated profound holiness. *That* is what infuriated the council! It gnawed at them that no matter how hard they tried to find some fault in Jesus, they couldn’t find it. Jesus didn’t need to give these phony witnesses the dignity of a reply, because everyone knew that He was innocent; and His face showed it!

Brethren, I believe we can learn something from this. There are times when holy calm, and silence, is the best way to show Christ’s righteousness. Obviously, this doesn’t mean that if you are taken to court one day for spreading the Gospel, you should say absolutely nothing. Stephen took the opportunity to preach one last convicting message before his death. Countless other believers down through the ages have said powerful and convicting things when they stood on trial for their faith; and their words had a powerful impact far beyond their lifetimes. However, there are times when it is best to be quiet—and *especially* when you, in your flesh, want to launch into a blazing tirade of self-defence, and to say sharp and caustic things against your accusers. At such times, the best way to bother the conscience of your accusers is to show *kindness* to them—just as Jesus quietly healed Malchus’ ear, even though Malchus was taking part in His arrest. Everything about Jesus’ countenance bespoke *kindness* and *love* toward His enemies; and this had the effect of burning coals on their heads!

Christian, when you, in your flesh, want to give someone a “piece of your mind,” remember what Solomon said: when you keep quiet, people will presume you to be wise, and of an excellent spirit. Isn’t that what we should want? Isn’t that what the *Lord* wants for us? Yes, there are times when the Spirit leads us to say stern and solemn words of warning to unbelievers; but it must always be done in kindness, and in a timely fashion. Don’t start running your mouth the instant you have been accused or insulted. When you are angry, and you start spilling out angry words, you look foolish—and guilty. Jesus is Wisdom incarnate. Follow His example! When people say false things against you, don’t angrily rail on them, and loudly defend yourself. Exercise *holy silence*; and let the Holy Spirit prod their hearts.

Now, let’s return to Caiaphas’ interrogation of Jesus. **(Read Matthew 26:63-64 again.)** At first, Jesus didn’t give any reply to Caiaphas. The false witnesses’ lying misrepresentations of His words weren’t even worthy of a reply. But when Caiaphas asked Jesus whether He were the Christ, the Son of God, He immediately replied, ***“Thou hast said.”*** (In **Mark**, Mark also records that Jesus said, ***“I am.”***) For 3 ½ years, Jesus had never directly said, “I am the Christ,” because His works plainly declared it. But now that He was directly asked the question, he affirmed it to be so; and He reinforced His claim with two Scriptures.

### **Daniel 7:13-14**

### **Psalm 110:1-7**

Folks, every word that Jesus said in His testimony is extremely powerful! First of all, Jesus answered the question ***“Art thou the Christ?”*** in the affirmative. However, He didn’t merely say ***“Thou hast said”***; as Mark records, He also said ***“Ego eimi”***—***“I am.”*** ***“I am”*** is the very meaning of God’s name, *Jehovah*. Once again, Jesus was intimating that He is God.

Secondly, Jesus called Himself the ***“Son of man.”*** Jesus often called Himself the Son of *God*; but He called Himself the “Son of Man” far more often. In the books of **Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John**, it is recorded more than 80 times that Jesus called Himself “the Son of Man.” Jesus’ title “Son of man” is important, because it emphasises the fact that Jesus truly is a Man. In the Old Testament, the term “son of man” was used once, in **Psalm 8**, to refer to mankind in general (although it also has a dual application to the Messiah). In the book of Ezekiel, the LORD spoke to the prophet Ezekiel 82 times; and every time, the LORD called Ezekiel “son of man.” In the Hebrew mind, “son of man” simply means “man.”

So, what does this show us? It shows us that Jesus *is* a Man. He is not a phantom: He is real flesh and blood. He was born as a Man; He died as a Man; and when He rose again, He came out of the tomb as a real, flesh-and-bone Man. Jesus *had* to come into this world as a Man in order to die for our sins. Jesus also had to rise again as a real, flesh-and-bone Man in order to be the Guarantor of *our* future resurrection. The title “Son of Man” is vital, because it teaches us that Jesus truly is the Sin-bearer and Advocate for our race.

However, there is another reason why the title “Son of Man” is so important. There is a particular Scripture in the Old Testament where the title “Son of Man” refers not to just any man, but to the Messiah. As we saw in **Daniel 7:13**, Daniel prophesied, ***"And I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him."***

Folks, this is an amazing verse! The ***"Ancient of days"*** is God the Father. Yet, He is seen as distinct from, yet equal with, the ***"Son of Man,"*** who is destined to rule the whole world! Notice carefully what Daniel said about this Son of Man. He said that He ***"came with the clouds of heaven."*** He also says that this Son of man came ***"near before"*** the Ancient of Days. This is no ordinary man! Only someone who is on equality with both God *and* Man could fit this description. We see this in **Psalms 110:1**, as well. In that verse David says, ***"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies my footstool."*** In this passage, God is speaking to God, and telling Him to sit at His right hand. This shows that there are at least two members to the Godhead. Yet, it is also obvious, from the rest of **Psalms 110**, that this “Lord” who is sitting on the right hand of “the LORD” is the *Messiah*, because it is said that He will destroy Israel’s enemies, and rule in Zion. That is the work of the Messiah. And guess what? Jesus applied *this* Scripture to Himself! In His reply He said, ***"Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power."***

*That*, my friends, is why the rulers of Israel went crazy when Jesus gave this reply! The words ***"Son of man," "coming in the clouds of heaven,"*** and ***"sitting on the right hand of power,"*** all refer back to **Daniel 7:13-14** and **Psalms 110:1**. These are powerful messianic prophecies: and Jesus unhesitatingly applied both of them to Himself.

Yet, that's not all. Not only did Jesus apply this messianic prophecy to Himself, but He clearly stated that the Son of Man, the Messiah, is *equal with* Jehovah, the Ancient of Days. By claiming to be on the ***"right hand of power,"*** Jesus was claiming to *share* God’s power and glory. Now, just for the record, the Bible says that God does *not share* His power or glory with anyone. For Jesus to claim to be on God’s “right hand of power” (in other words, sharing God’s power and glory) is the same thing as saying that He is God; and the Sanhedrin understood this. That is why they said that Jesus had blasphemed. If Jesus were *not* God, He surely *would* have been guilty of blasphemy, of the worst kind. However, Jesus *is* God. He is

both the Son of God and the Son of Man; and He proved it by being lifted up on the cross, as Scripture foretold, and by dying for our sins, and rising again the third day.

### III. The Sanhedrin's agreement to kill Jesus (vv. 65-68)

**(Read Matthew 26:65-68 again.)** At this point in the trial, many more illegalities were committed in order to push through a death sentence on Jesus. First of all, the council didn't allow Jesus to defend Himself.<sup>5</sup> Jesus had affirmed that He is the Christ; and given the countless miracles that He had done, the evidence demanded that He be given the chance to expand on His statement, and defend it. But they denied Him that right. Instead, they passed a "guilty" verdict, after probably no more than a couple hours of deliberation. By the way, this constituted yet another illegality. Passing a verdict on the first day of a trial was forbidden by Jewish law, because it was considered much too hasty to be just; yet, in Jesus' case, they totally ignored the law.<sup>6</sup> Also, the high priest, Caiaphas, rent his clothes. This was a common thing for Jewish people to do when they were angry or grieved; but it was not fitting for the high priest of Israel. God had expressly forbidden the high priest to rend his clothes.

#### Leviticus 21:10

The satanic hatred of mankind toward the Son of God was on full display on the night of His trial; but perhaps nothing else better illustrates man's united hatred of Christ than the Sanhedrin's *unanimous* verdict to put Jesus to death! In **Mark 14:64**, Mark records that ***"They all condemned him to be guilty of death."*** To this day, the world still condemns Jesus to death. I have read statements of unbelievers in modern times who say that if Jesus were to come back to earth again, they would crucify Him again! Sinful mankind hates Jesus' Person and work because He is the holy Son of God, and He exposes their sin. And yet, there are still some who come to the Light. In **John 3:20-21**, Jesus said, ***"Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."*** Those who reject the Light are always in the overwhelming majority; yet, there is always a small remnant who receive Him; and such was the case on the night of Christ's trial.

You see, there were two members of the Sanhedrin who would *not* have condemned Jesus, *if* they had been present. Their names were **Nicodemus**, and **Joseph of Arimathea**. Both of them were timid believers in Jesus—but believers nonetheless; and they obviously were *not* called to the counsel that night. If they had been there, they would have voted "no"; and the verdict would *not* have been unanimous. This reveals yet two more illegalities. First of all, the law stated that if the verdict were *unanimous*, then the defendant was to be *acquitted*!<sup>7</sup> Yes, you heard right. You see, a unanimous verdict was considered to be much too hasty and



ill-informed. The reason for this law was that if there were not at least *one* man out of 71 council members who objected, then there must not have been enough critical thinking going on. According to their own law, then, their unanimous vote against Jesus *should have* been rendered null and void. Yet, they ignored the Law. Also, a vote wasn't even allowed to be taken unless the *entire membership* were present; and Joseph and Nicodemus clearly were not present.<sup>8</sup> Yet, the Sanhedrin ignored this law, too. The other 69 members of the council knew that these Nicodemus and Joseph had shown sympathy toward Jesus in the past; and they didn't want them making any objections. They just wanted Jesus dead!

Now, if you want to see man's real heart attitude toward the Saviour, just look at how they began to treat Jesus as soon as the "guilty" verdict was passed. They couldn't wait to get their hands on Him! They spat in His face, they buffeted Him (punched Him in the face), slapped Him, and mocked Him. Once again, all these things were prophesied of the Messiah.

#### Isaiah 50:4-7 / Isaiah 52:13-14

**Conclusion:** Satan's "hour of darkness" was now beginning in earnest; and many more injustices lay ahead for the Son of God. Yet, Jesus was not ashamed. He had set His face like a flint; and He was prepared to go to the cross of Calvary. Christian, Jesus wasn't ashamed to die for you. Are you ashamed of Him? Are you like Paul, who said, "***For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation***"? Or are you like Peter on the night of Christ's trial? Are you hiding in the shadows, and afraid to be seen as a follower of Jesus? If so, draw near to Him! And if you are not sure that you are saved, I urge you to believe on Christ today. You don't have to blaspheme Jesus' name to be against Him; all you have to do to be against Him is not to be *for* Him. You can't be neutral! If you are not saved—if you've never repented of your sin and truly placed your faith in Him—please do so today!

<sup>1</sup> Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1980), p. 307.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Michael Bere, *Bible Doctrines for Today* (Pensacola, FL: A Beka Book, 1996), p. 147.

<sup>4</sup> Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew*, p. 307.

<sup>5</sup> Bere, *Bible Doctrines for Today*, p. 150.

<sup>6</sup> Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew*, p. 307.

<sup>7</sup> Bere, *Bible Doctrines for Today*, p. 150.

<sup>8</sup> Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, "The Jewish Court System," <https://aish.com/48936377/>