

CONCERNING THE WAY

June 12, 2012

LESSON 140: THE GOSPEL OF LUKE



Chapter 22

We continue Luke's account of the Passion Week – the week leading up to the crucifixion of Christ. In this section Luke brings out the climax of the Messiah's rejection by the religious leaders of the nation of Israel, representing not only the entire nation but the entire world.

Wednesday

Luke 22:1-6 Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was near. (2) So the high priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put him to death, for they were afraid of the crowd. (3) But Satan went into Judas called Iscariot, who belonged to the circle of the twelve. (4) So he went off and discussed with the high priests and the temple police how he could betray him to them. (5) They were delighted and agreed to give him money. (6) He accepted their offer and began to look for a good opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present.

- The feast was called Passover but it wasn't actually the same thing. The Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted for a week, from the 15th to the 21st of Nisan (April), but the Passover meal was on the 15th of Nisan. It commemorated the deliverance of the people of Israel from their slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12). On that night the angel of death killed the first-born son in every Egyptian family, but he passed over the homes of the Israelites, because they had smeared the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. On that night they left so quickly that, for their last meal, they had no time to bake bread with leaven (yeast), so they ate unleavened bread.
- Many people came to Jerusalem to observe Passover, so there were a lot of preparations for the crowds of pilgrims that were to come. Roads and bridges were repaired, and even roadside tombs were whitewashed so that no travelers would touch them by mistake and become unclean. For a month before all the synagogues taught the story and meaning of the Passover. Two days before Passover in every home there was a ceremonial search for leaven. The head of the house took a candle and searched every nook and cranny of the house for every last speck of leaven. Leaven symbolizes sin.
- Every male Jew who was of age and lived within 15 miles of the holy city was bound by law to come to the Passover. Also, it was the goal of every Jew in every part of the world (and still is) to come to the Passover in Jerusalem at least once in his lifetime. So there were huge numbers of people in Jerusalem at this time. One year the Governor of Palestine in the time of Nero took a census of the lambs that were slaughtered at Passover. Josephus tells us the number was 256,500. It has been estimated, according to the laws of Passover, that there must have been more than 2,700,000 people participating in Passover in Jerusalem that year. So this was the kind of atmosphere in Jerusalem during Jesus' last Passover.
- Satan "possessed" Judas here, just as he had once possessed the human bodies of the kings of Babylon and Tyre (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-15) and will possess the body of the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3; Revelation 13:3-5). Before a demon (or, in this case, Satan) can take over the body of a human being, that person must somehow have made themselves open to his temptations. The sins of Satan himself (pride, unbelief, covetousness, blasphemy) are his most effective weapons in temptation. These sins of the mind can lead to increasingly worse sins of the flesh and leave the person open to full demonic control. In Judas'

case, his covetousness led to his becoming a thief and finally to his betrayal of his teacher and friend. Apparently Judas was ripe for Satan to enter him and take that last fatal step of betraying the Messiah (also John 13:2, 27). Let's discuss: Is it possible for a Christian to be demon-possessed?

- Satan's taking part in Jesus' death was actually his own downfall, because through dying Jesus conquered Satan and death (Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14).
- Just as God is always looking for men to be his willing instruments, so is Satan. A person can be the tool of good or of evil, of God or of the devil. We can be the servant of the light or of the dark. Satan could not have entered into Judas unless Judas had opened the door. It is our own decision whether we will choose to be the instrument of Satan or a weapon in the hand of God. Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, we are in a war. You cannot be neutral in this war – if you are not serving God, you are serving Satan.

Thursday

Luke 22:7-13 Then the day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread came, on which the Passover lamb was to be sacrificed. (8) So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover meal." (9) They asked him, "Where do you want us to prepare it?" (10) He said to them, "Just after you go into the city, a man carrying a jug of water will meet you. Follow him into the house he enters (11) and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks you, "Where is the room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?"' (12) Then he will show you a large upstairs room that is furnished. Get things ready for us there." (13) So they went and found everything just as Jesus had told them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

- The importance of this festival was to remind the people that they were a separate people, a holy people. The unleavened bread symbolized holiness.
- The better class houses had two rooms. The one room was on the top of the other; and the house looked exactly like a small box placed on top of a large one. The upper room was reached by an outside stair. During the Passover time all lodging in Jerusalem was free. It was normal for a Rabbi to reserve an upper room to meet with his favorite disciples to talk things over with them and open his heart to them. What was unusual about the instructions Jesus gave them? Keep in mind the culture of the times.

Luke 22:14-16 Now when the hour came, he took his place at the table, along with the apostles. (15) He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer. (16) For I tell you, I will never again eat one until it finds its fulfillment in the kingdom of God." (17) Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. (18) For I tell you, from now on I will never drink the product of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

- Jesus' final teaching about the kingdom happened at this final feast. Jesus and His disciples, now called apostles (see 6:13; 9:10; 17:5; 24:10), were reclined at the table. Jesus enjoyed the fellowship of these men who had believed His message of the kingdom. They were the ones who had followed Him, knowing that He was really the Messiah. They were the ones who had left everything in order to follow Him. They had been called to a radical type of discipleship.
- Jesus announced that this was the last Passover He would eat with them until all that it means would find fulfillment in the kingdom of God. Many events in the Old Testament, including the Passover, pointed toward the ministry of Jesus and the kingdom He was to establish. When His kingdom arrives, the Passover will be fulfilled because God will have brought His people safely into their rest.

Luke 22:19-20 Then he took a loaf of bread, gave thanks, broke it in pieces, and handed it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Keep on doing this in memory of me." (20) He did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for you.

- This is what we know as the Lord's Supper. Bread and wine were used at every meal in that culture. But Jesus was instituting something new here. Now these simple everyday "elements" would symbolize His "body," the sacrifice for the entire nation, and His "blood." He was the sacrificial Lamb who was to take away the sin of Israel and of the entire world (John 1:29). He was teaching His men that His death would mean the beginning of the New Covenant. The symbolism about the bread and the fruit of the vine was given to show that Jesus' body and blood were required to begin the New Covenant.
- The New Covenant (spoken of many times in the OT but highlighted in Jeremiah 31:31-34), which was required for the Kingdom Age, was instituted by Jesus' sacrifice, and replaces the covenant of the Law, the Mosaic Covenant. The covenant actually began with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2). Believers in the Church Age, both Jews and Gentiles, now enjoy the benefits of the New Covenant (1 Corinthians 11:25-26; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:6-7). But the ultimate fulfillment of the New Covenant will make possible the regeneration of the Israelite nation and the Holy Spirit's indwelling of people in the nation during the Millennial Kingdom.
- Verse 20 makes it clear that the liquid in the cup was not actual blood but "the product of the vine." But it became a symbol of His shed blood, just as the bread represented His broken body. This last meal of the Lord has been commemorated by His followers ever since (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). The regular practice of the Lord's Supper, or the Holy Communion, or whatever it may be called by different churches, has become a perpetual testimony to the authenticity of the Christian faith, having been practiced by Christians for almost 2,000 years. There is no way of explaining how this has happened except that Christ Himself commanded it just before He died.
- The Lord's Supper that we observe is called a sacrament. A sacrament is something, usually a very ordinary thing, which has a special meaning for people who have eyes to see and a heart to understand. Most of us have in our homes a drawer or closet full of things which many might call junk, and yet we will not throw them out, because when we touch and handle and look at them, they bring back this or that person, or this or that event or memory. They are common things but they have meaning to us. That is a sacrament.
- The bread which we eat at the Lord's Supper is common bread, but, for him who has a heart to feel and understand, it is the actual body of Christ. God knows that we tend to forget things easily, so this is how He wants us to remember what it took to heal the rift between us and Him, the death of His Son.

Luke 22:21-23 Yet look! The hand of the man who is betraying me is with me on the table! (22) For the Son of Man is going away, just as it has been determined, but how terrible it will be for that man by whom he is betrayed!" (23) Then they began to discuss among themselves which one of them was going to do this.

- Jesus now revealed that the betrayer was one of the disciples eating the Passover meal. In verse 22 we see that it was God's sovereign plan for this to happen, but Judas is still accountable. Jesus had to die, because His death was the basis of salvation for all mankind and the only way to remove the curse of sin. But the betrayer was accountable for his actions. Apparently the disciples had trusted Judas completely, because they had no idea who would do such a thing (v. 23). You can read more detail about Judas at the Passover meal in John 13:26-30.

- It is a sad fact that Jesus Christ has people who betray him at every Lord's Supper, because if we pledge ourselves to him and then by our lives go out to deny him, we too are traitors to him.

Luke 22:24-27 Now an argument sprang up among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. (25) But he said to them, "The kings of the gentiles lord it over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. (26) But you are not to do so. On the contrary, the greatest among you should become like the youngest, and the one who leads should become like the one who serves. (27) For who is greater, the one who sits at the table, or the one who serves? It is the one at the table, isn't it? But I am among you as one who serves.

- It is sad that, so close to the cross, the disciples start arguing about who will be the greatest. This shows that they still did not really understand what was about to happen. Jesus told them that kind of thinking is the way pagans think. The followers of the Messiah should not think about such things. Rather than wanting to be the greatest, His followers should want to be the one who serves. Jesus was with them as One who serves (diakonōn, "serves in a lowly way," v. 27). The disciples should want to be like Jesus.
- This kind of thing still goes on in the church today, people jockeying for positions of power and authority. The saints today haven't improved much over the apostles, have they?

Luke 22:28-30 "You are the ones who have always stood by me in my trials. (29) And I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, (30) so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit down on thrones to govern the twelve tribes of Israel."

- Jesus promised his disciples that those who had stood by him through thick and thin would reign with Him in the end. All those who have shared in the bearing of Christ's cross will someday share in the wearing of his crown and share in His reign. However, there has never been anyone like those apostles, they will hold a special place of prominence in the kingdom.
- This promise is about the millennial kingdom. At that time, Israel will be restored fully to its promised land, with all the tribes, and the resurrected saints of the church age, with the twelve apostles, will judge the world (1 Corinthians 6:2). In his book of the Revelation, John said: "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them" (Revelation 20:4).

Luke 22:31-34 "Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has asked permission to sift all of you like wheat, (32) but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail. When you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers." (33) Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go even to prison and to death with you!" (34) But Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you deny three times that you know me."

- Jesus predicted that Peter would deny Him three times that same night, before the rooster crows. But, He told Peter that in spite of Satan's desire to "sift" the disciples like wheat (to put them through difficult times), Peter's faith would not fail. He would be restored (turned back), and would be the leader of the disciples. Peter objected, thinking that he was strong, saying confidently that he would even go to prison or to death for Jesus.
- Peter was a paradox in some ways.
 - Even though he would deny Jesus later that night, he was passionately devoted to Jesus. This gives hope to those of us who sometimes deny Jesus by our actions.

- Peter was a man of courage, but always overconfident. This is something we also must guard against. It seems like as soon as we say that is something we will never do, that becomes the thing that we are most tempted to do. Satan sometimes attacks the point where a person is too sure of himself, because that's where we are unprepared.
- Jesus said a wonderful thing to Peter. "When you have turned back," he said, "strengthen your brothers." It's like Jesus said to Peter, "You will deny me; and you will weep bitter tears; but the result will be that you will be better able to help your brothers who are going through it." We can help someone so much more if we have been in the same situation as they have been. It was said of Jesus, "He can help others who are going through it because he has been through it himself." (Hebrews 2:18.) Experiencing pain, failure and betrayal is not all for nothing, because it gives us sympathy and an understanding that otherwise we would never have had.
- Jesus said He would pray for Peter. Jesus prays for us, as well (John 17:9). He is our intercessor. He died for the whole world, but He prays for those that belong to Him that they would be kept while they are in the world. Jesus prayed for you today!
- What does verse 31 tell us about Satan's power?

Luke 22:35-38 Then he said to them, "When I sent you out without a wallet, traveling bag, or sandals, you didn't lack anything, did you?" They replied, "Nothing at all." (36) Then he said to them, "But now the one who has a wallet must take it along, and his traveling bag, too. And the one who has no sword must sell his coat and buy one. (37) For I tell you, what has been written about me must be fulfilled: 'He was counted among the criminals.' Indeed, what is written about me must be fulfilled." (38) So they said, "Lord, look! Here are two swords." He answered them, "Enough of that!"

- Jesus pointed out to His disciples that they had never lacked anything while they were with Him and were sent out to minister for Him (Luke. 9:3). But now that He was going to be taken away from them, they would have to make preparations for their ministries including money, luggage, and a weapon for personal protection. They would be going out into the world and they had to make practical preparations.
- Jesus was about to die and be "counted with the criminals", a quotation from Isaiah 53:12. When the disciples responded that they had two swords, Jesus said, "Enough of that!", or in some translations, "That is enough." Many people wonder what Jesus meant by that.
- This has been interpreted in at least four ways:
 1. Some understand Jesus' words as a rebuke to the disciples. That's the way this translation chooses to interpret it.
 2. Some think Jesus was saying that even two swords would not be enough to stop God's plan for the death of Christ. Swords could not stop God's purpose and plan.
 3. Jesus may simply have been saying that two swords were enough for the 12 of them.
 4. Others see the context with the quotation from Isaiah in verse 37 and understand Jesus to mean that by having two swords they would be seen by others as transgressors or criminals. Which of these makes the most sense to you?
- What does verse 36 tell you about self-defense?

Luke 22:39-46 Then he left and went to the Mount of Olives, as usual. The disciples went with him. (40) When he came to the place, he said to them, "**Keep on praying that you may not come into temptation.**" (41) Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and began to pray, (42) "**Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Yet not my will but yours be done.**" (43) Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. (44) In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like large drops of blood falling on the ground. (45) When he got up from prayer, he went to the disciples and found them asleep from sorrow. (46) He said to them, "**Why are you sleeping? Get up and keep on praying that you may not come into temptation.**"

- The account of Jesus' praying in Gethsemane is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels but not in John. But, John tells us that Jesus went to "an olive grove" because Jesus "often met there with His disciples" and Judas "knew the place" (John 18:1-2). And we know that during this last week He went to the garden to sleep.
- There may be deep meaning in the fact that in some of His final hours Jesus faced temptation in a garden. Man fell into sin because of temptation in a garden (Genesis 3). And man's deliverance from sin comes about because Jesus resists temptation in a garden. Jesus, the "last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45), did not fall into temptation but followed the will of God which the first Adam failed to do.
- Luke says the place was the Mount of Olives. Matthew and Mark refer to the place as Gethsemane, which means "olive press." The "garden" was a grove of olive trees on the Mount of Olives (John 18:1, 3). Jesus prayed intensely for the trial to pass, but He submitted Himself to His Father. Because the disciples slept, Jesus was alone praying and being pounded by the temptation to forsake the Father's plan, which was that the Son must go to death and bear the sins of the whole world. You can see that He was not concerned with His own interests but with the interests of the Father (Luke 22:42). Was Jesus afraid to die?
- Only Luke tells us that an angel tended to Jesus in the garden (v. 43). Jesus was in anguish with His sweat being like drops of blood falling to the ground. Remember that Jesus was enduring the testing in the garden only as a man, not calling on His own divine nature, and it was appropriate that the Father would send an angel to encourage Him for the ordeal coming. Luke is also the only gospel writer to mention the bloody sweat, maybe because of his interest as a physician in this rare phenomenon, which tells us how intense the spiritual agony was that Jesus was suffering as He faced the terrible trauma of being made sin and having the Father forsake Him. This was the agony He had to endure for the world of lost sinners.
- Jesus found His disciples... asleep, exhausted from sorrow. The disciples were depressed because of Jesus' teaching that He would die. They were not only in physical danger, which was bound to come on them, but they may also have experienced spiritual attacks in the garden. Twice Jesus told them to pray that they would not fall into temptation (vv. 40, 46).

Luke 22:47-53 While Jesus was still speaking, a crowd came up. The man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them, and he came close to Jesus to kiss him. (48) But Jesus said to him, "**Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?**" (49) When those who were around him saw what was about to take place, they asked, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" (50) Then one of them struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (51) But Jesus said, "**No more of this!**" So he touched his ear and healed him. (52) Then Jesus said to the high priests, the temple police, and the elders, who had come for him, "**Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? (53) While I was with you day after day in the temple, you didn't lay a hand on**

me. But this is your hour, when darkness reigns!"

- This, of course, was no surprise to Jesus. He knew that Judas was coming. Notice He even knew the secret sign that Judas had agreed to use to identify him to the mob - the kiss. When a disciple met a beloved Rabbi, he laid his right hand on the Rabbi's left shoulder and his left hand on the right shoulder and kissed him. It was the kiss of a disciple to a beloved master that Judas used as a sign of betrayal.
- Jesus had compassion for people even in the midst of His own arrest (Luke 22:49-51). After Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (named Malchus, John 18:10), using one of the two swords the disciples had (verse 38), Jesus healed the man. This was not the time to use the swords.
- Jesus, as He had always done, pointed out the hypocrisy of the religious leaders (vv. 52-53). Jesus asked them why they had not arrested Him during the day as He taught in the temple. The reason was obvious, because they were afraid that the people might riot. So He could tell them, "This is your hour—when darkness reigns" (v. 53). Not only were they arresting Him under the cover of darkness, but they were also acting as the forces of darkness to kill the Messiah.
- The garden arrest must have ended by about 2:30 a.m., because all six trials of Jesus were finished by morning and Jesus was on the cross by 9 a.m. The arrest in the garden was illegal because it was done at night and was accomplished through a hired accuser.
- Judas had found a way to betray Jesus in a way that the authorities could approach him when the crowd was not there. He knew that Jesus was in the habit of going at nights to the garden on the hill.
- There were four different parties involved in this arrest, and their actions and reactions are very significant.
 - There was Judas the traitor. He was the man who had abandoned God and entered into an alliance with Satan. Only when a person has put God out of his life and taken Satan in, that he can sink to selling Christ.
 - There were the Jews who had come to arrest Jesus. They were the men who were blind to God. When God incarnate came to this earth, all that they could think of was how to get rid of Him. For so long they had chosen their own way and shut their ears to the voice of God and their eyes to his guidance that in the end they could not recognize him when he came. It is a terrible thing to be blind and deaf to God.
 - There were the disciples. They were the men who at this moment had forgotten God. Their world had come apart and they were sure the end had come. The last thing they remembered at that moment was God; the only thing they thought of was the terrible situation they were in, and they ran away (Matthew 26:56). When we forget God and leave him out of the situation, two things happen. We become terrified and completely confused. We lose the power to face life and to cope with it. In the time of trial, life is unlivable without God.
 - There was Jesus. And Jesus was the one person in the whole scene who remembered God. The amazing thing about him, as we see here and in the next chapter, was His absolute serenity once Gethsemane was over. Here, at his arrest, he's the one who seemed to be in control; and even at his trial, it was He who was the judge. The man who walks with God can cope with any situation and look any enemy in the eyes, undefeated and unafraid. It is only when a man has bowed to God that he can talk and act like a conqueror.

Luke 22:54-62 Then they arrested him, led him away, and brought him to the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. (55) When they had kindled a fire

in the middle of the courtyard and had taken their seats, Peter, too, sat down among them. (56) A servant girl saw him sitting by the fire, stared at him, and said, "This man was with him, too." (57) But he denied it, saying, "I don't know him, woman!" (58) A little later a man looked at him and said, "You are one of them, too." But Peter said, "Mister, I am not!" (59) About an hour later another man emphatically asserted, "This man was certainly with him, for he is a Galilean!" (60) But Peter said, "Mister, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just then, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. (61) Then the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord and how he had said to him, **"Before a rooster crows today, you will deny me three times."** (62) And he went outside and cried bitterly.

Jesus' Six Trials	
Religious Trials	
Before Annas	John 18:12-14
Before Caiaphas	Matthew 26:57-68
Before the Sanhedrin	Matthew 27:1-2
Civil Trials	
Before Pilate	John 18:28-38
Before Herod	Luke 23:6-12
Before Pilate	John 18:39-19:6

- Jesus faced six trials in all: three before Jewish officials, and three before Roman officials. Luke recorded only two of the three Jewish trials. You can read about the other trials in the passages given above.

Jesus was taken into the house of the high priest, who was Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57; John 18:13). But Jesus first was taken to Caiaphas' influential father-in-law, Annas (John 18:13). Both of these were illegal actions, because they were not official courts and it was the middle of the night. The purpose was for the authorities to gloat over him and, if possible, to trip him up in cross-examination so that a charge could be framed against him.

- Peter, being true to his word up to this point (verse 33), followed the Lord even though it could have meant death for him. The palace of the high priest probably had an open courtyard with a gate. Apparently people were allowed to enter this courtyard to wait for the proceedings to be over.
- Within several hours Peter denied Jesus three times, as He had foretold (v. 34). Peter's denials got progressively more heated. After the rooster crowed, Jesus, probably being led out, turned and looked straight at Peter. The combination of events along with Jesus' look caused Peter to remember the words Jesus spoke earlier in the evening. Peter realized what he had done. His bitter crying showed he was heartbroken over the fact he had denied Jesus. Now he finally realized that there was no good in him, he was not capable of being faithful to Jesus on his own.
- Jesus didn't look at Peter in anger, but in sorrow. It probably would have been easier for Peter if Jesus had condemned Him in anger, because that's what he certainly had coming, but to see the look of heartbreak in Jesus' eyes was like a knife to the heart of Peter, who loved His Master so much. Some have said that there was really not much difference between Judas and Peter. The only real difference is that Peter repented of what he had done and was restored to fellowship, and Judas did not repent, and he went out and hung himself.

Luke 22:63-65 Then the men who were holding Jesus in custody began to make fun of him while they beat him. (64) They blindfolded him and asked him over and over again, "Prophecy! Who is the one who hit you?" (65) And they kept insulting him in many

other ways.

- While at the house of the high priest, Jesus began to be abused by the men who were guarding Him. These were the Temple police. They mocked Him and beat Him. Blindfolding Him, they mockingly asked Him to prophesy by telling who hit Him. Apparently they knew of His claims, but they had a misunderstanding of the prophecy.
- Some commentators believe that Luke couldn't bear to give us the details of these beatings. They must have beaten the face of Christ to a pulp, so that you couldn't even recognize him (Isaiah 52:14).

Luke 22:66-71 As soon as day came, the elders of the people, the high priests, and the scribes assembled and brought him before their Council. (67) They said, "If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you won't believe me, (68) and if I ask you a question, you won't answer me. (69) But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God." (70) Then they all asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" He answered them, "You say that I am." (71) Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it ourselves from his own mouth!"

- The "elders of the people" (also known as the Sanhedrin) was the Jewish nation's official judicial body. This council was their final court of appeals. If the council found Jesus guilty, it was the last word—the nation found Him guilty. They met at daybreak since it was illegal to assemble at night. The council wanted to know if Jesus was the Christ, that is, if Jesus was truly presenting Himself as the Messiah. Since the council already knew that Jesus had been presenting Himself as the Messiah, they may have been giving Him a last chance to deny it. Or maybe they were trying to humiliate Him in front of His followers.
- Jesus affirmed His authority as Messiah, the One who, after His death, resurrection, and Ascension, would be seated at the right hand of the mighty God, the place of honor (see Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:33; 5:31; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). Jesus' answer in verse 70 was not a denial, in fact it could be better translated, "Yes, I am.", as it is in the NASB. But the sense of the Greek here is that He was saying, "Yes, I am, but you don't really understand what that means." Also He plainly told the council that He is the Son of God.
- The council decided they had heard all the testimony they needed. In their view Jesus was guilty of blasphemy. So they were ready to hand Him over to the Roman authorities. The council could give a guilty verdict, but the Jews at that time were not allowed to carry out the death penalty. Only Rome could sentence to death. Even though Jesus had performed messianic miracles, the leaders of the nation refused to believe. They acted on behalf of the nation in rejecting Christ.
- The court sat in a semi-circle, where every member could see every other member. Facing the court stood the prisoner. Behind him sat the rows of the students and disciples of the Rabbis. They might speak in defense of the prisoner but not against him. All charges must be supported by the evidence of two witnesses independently examined. A member of the court might speak against the prisoner, and then change his mind and speak for him, but not vice-versa. When a verdict was due, each member had to give his individual judgment, beginning at the youngest and going on to the most senior. For acquittal a majority of one was all that was necessary; for condemnation there must be a majority of at least two. Sentence of death could never be carried out on the day on which it was given; they had to sleep on it for a night so that they might change their minds and decide to be merciful. The whole procedure was designed for mercy; and, even from Luke's short account of it, it is obvious that the Sanhedrin, when it tried Jesus, was far from keeping its own rules and regulations.