

“Blasphemy”

“We heard him say, ‘I shall destroy this temple made with hands and after three days I shall build another, not made with hands.’”

Who do you think you are, Jesus? You think you’re greater than God – that you can bind the strong man and destroy His Temple? You’re going to build a greater Temple?

The high priest asks Him directly – “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” Jesus said, “I am. You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of God’s power and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

Blasphemy! No need to hear any more witnesses. This man, this Jesus of Nazareth, is mocking God – saying sacrilegious things about our God – insulting and injuring Him with his words! Jesus – you deserve to die for mocking God!

Who is truly guilty of blasphemy? Is it not those who take God-in-the-flesh-Jesus and spit on Him, blindfold Him, strike Him – mockingly refer to Him as the Christ – beat Him, and haul Him away?

If that were not bad enough – while the religious authorities mock God – one of His own followers, one of His closest disciples, is adamantly denying Him – not once, or twice, but three times.

What greater blasphemy than to deny that you have anything to do with Jesus – to distance yourself completely from God who comes to save sinners?

You want to talk about mockery – this whole assembly of the Sanhedrin is a mockery – this whole trial is a sham, a miscarriage of justice. They pretend to honor and uphold the will of God – doing what is right in His eyes – but they are not even playing by their own rules.

This Council meets under the cover of darkness while the world is sleeping to do their evil deeds. Justice is to be carried out in the light of the day – transparency! But they scheme, they hide, they lie and bring false charges – so that their will may be done.

They misuse the name of the Lord their God – abusing justice to get rid of God. They will even go so far as to make use of the Romans system of justice – the Romans who they hate and despise – but who are necessary in order to carry out their death wish. They betray Jesus – hand Him over to Pilate. They are guilty of blasphemy!

Oh, how pious they pretend to be. “They themselves did not go into the judgment hall, so that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.” In their own Pilate-like way, they wash their hands of Jesus – letting others sit in the seat of judgment.

They don’t want to be defiled by entering into the house of a Gentile. That would make them ceremonially unclean – unable to eat the Passover feast. And yet, they have no problem associating with Pilate to “get the job done.”

Like true priests, they hand over the Lamb to be sacrificed. They’ll do their evil deed and then celebrate the feast – going to the Temple to have fellowship with God – eating the Passover while rejecting the Passover Lamb – eating without faith in Jesus.

They are defiled. They are blasphemous. They have made a mockery of the Passover – mocking and injuring the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Pilate sits on the judgment seat. He questions the accused. Who are you? What have you done? What is truth? He even speaks the truth – “I find no fault in this man.”

But when the opportunity arises to get out of the hot-seat, Pilate sends Jesus to Herod. It’s a jurisdictional matter. Let Herod take care of this inconvenient truth.

Herod isn’t interested in the truth, in justice – he only wants to be fascinated with a miracle from Jesus. “But He gave [Herod] no answer” – while the chief priests and scribes vehemently scream their accusations.

Herod and his soldiers join the ever-growing crowds of blasphemers. They mock Jesus, put a splendid robe on Jesus and send Him back to Pilate. And with the ball back in his court – Pilate too becomes a blasphemer. “Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that same day.”

Pilate is torn. He's in a tug-of-war. Part of him wants to set Jesus free because He's innocent – but part of him wants to please the mob and save his own skin. Jesus has done nothing wrong. He's innocent. And yet, he punishes the innocent One – has Him whipped to shreds – let's his soldiers mockingly hail Jesus as a king, kneel before Him with false homage and reverence.

What greater blasphemy than to declare God-in-the-flesh Jesus “not guilty” – and then handing Him over to be crucified. He kills the innocent One, and the murderer he sets free. Blasphemy.

Wash your hands all you want Pilate, but the blood will not come off. You can claim your innocence all you want – you can try to find solace in the crowd's demand, “His blood be on us and on our children” – but you are still guilty, Pilate.

“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.” Oh, how we try to wash our hands – pretending to be pious – speaking of truth and justice – diverting the blood of our own hands onto others.

We mock God when we will not gather at His feet to hear His Word of truth. We mock God when we eat of His feast – defiled by impenitence – or just going through the proper religious motions. His blood is upon us and upon our children! We are guilty – we have blasphemed His holy name – we have mocked God.

Thanks be to God that the innocent One is crucified so that the guilty might be set free. Thanks be to God that Jesus, the Passover Lamb, is handed over – so that the death our mockery deserves might pass-over us.

O Lord, wash our lips of denial, betrayal, and blasphemy – and give us lips to declare your praise. There is no greater praise than to confess our sin – and to confess Jesus as the Christ – God who comes in the flesh to save sinners.

Let us call upon His name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks – to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.