

# Two Interrogations: One Truth

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we read just a moment ago, verses 15 to 27, we read of two interrogations, but one truth.

This morning, most of you were here this morning, this morning we were, remember, we were considering the first 11 verses of this chapter where we read of the betrayal and the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, and where we were looking through the lens of Scripture and we saw it through that lens, darkness, the darkness, yes, the physical darkness of night as Jesus was in that garden, but of course the spiritual darkness around as the armed guards, the soldiers, the Roman soldiers with Jesus' betrayer, Judas, around Jesus there to arrest him.

And as we read there, actually arresting Jesus. This was the moment, this was the time appointed for all eternity when Jesus would be taken and brought before his interrogators and tried, found guilty of no crime, guilty of, worthy of punishment and yet taken to be sacrificed on the cross.

And as we noticed this morning up to this point in his ministry, Jesus had evaded his captors. He hadn't been taken, but the time had come, the hour had come, and Jesus will be the once for all sacrifice for sin.

And as we noticed this morning, and I am maybe going over this morning's sermon just in general, but we do need to do it again to bring us to where we reach in verse 15, because this morning, remember, we noticed that Jesus was in full control of all the events that were happening to him.

[ 2 : 05 ] He was in full control of the circumstances that you read there in the first 11 verses. It wasn't Jesus' captors who were the dominant ones. It was Jesus.

Jesus revealing his divine power, revealing his divine authority. Jesus revealing who he is when he declared, when he was asked, who are you, Jesus of Nazareth, and telling them, I am, I am he, that designation that tells us of Jesus' divinity.

And of course, as we read, when Jesus uttered for the first time, I am, I am he, as captors falling to the ground. They couldn't stand before the power of the Lord Jesus.

But as we noticed, Jesus permitted them to continue in their wicked deed to arrest him, to take him for trial that very night.

And again, as we said, Jesus fully in control of the situation, fully prepared to drink from the cup of God's wrath, to drink from the cup of wrath, his father's wrath, so that Jesus would suffer in our place.

[ 3 : 20 ] And that's where we reached. That's where we reached this morning. And well, as we read there from verse 12 down to verse 14, as we read, Jesus is taken, he's taken to the Jewish leader, Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, Caiaphas the high priest, and Jesus is going to face interrogation before a senior member of the Jewish elite.

But all the time, of course, Jesus is the elite. Jesus is the sovereign one. He is in full control as he's taken from that point towards Calvary.

And, you know, as John hears, John, the author of this gospel, as he takes us through, as it were, this next phase of these dramatic hours, these hours leading up to the crucifixion.

What do you notice from verse 15 to 27? You notice how John weaves. You know, this is a wonderful way of words. He weaves these two related occurrences there in that courtyard of the high priest's palace.

You see that, verse 15 to 18, and then you jump down to verse 25 to 27, and in these two sections, you see Peter questioned about his relationship with Jesus.

[ 4 : 43 ] And then you notice in verse 19 to 25, these verses sandwiched between the first section and the third section. And that second section, that central section, you are there of Jesus.

And you see Jesus, as it were, at the centre. He's centred in between the way that Peter shows his falsehood, Peter showing his denial of the Lord Jesus.

And amidst that denial, at the centre, is Jesus. Jesus revealing his truth, the truth of who he is, as opposed to the falsehood of Peter's denial of Jesus.

And there's, of course, there has to be application in what we're looking at here. Because, well, we know, of course, that we're approaching the time of year when our thoughts so often turn to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

And as we, our thoughts, you know, turn to the crucial centrality of Jesus' death and resurrection, that we see that Jesus is utterly focused.

[ 5 : 56 ] He's in complete control as he faces his accusers. He's not going to yield to their taunts. He's not going to yield to their accusations. He's going to remain true.

He's going to bear witness to the truth, even though his interrogators are conducting even this trial illegally. Even though he's facing these opponents who want rid of him.

Jesus, in bearing truth, is giving God the glory. And it's a response then, your response and my response, to bow before him in adoration.

And to follow him with all our hearts. In response to what he did for you and what he did for me. And so we see the Lord Jesus and his glory there, even in that courtyard in Jerusalem.

But there's a warning as well. There's a warning in this passage. And of course the warning scene there in the case of Peter. Because if Jesus bore true witness to himself, Peter bore false witness.

[ 7 : 06 ] Peter, at that moment there in that courtyard, he wouldn't associate himself with Jesus. At that moment, he was ashamed of his Lord.

And you see that when he's confronted, when he's questioned about his allegiance to Jesus. And we'll obviously look at that more closely in a moment. But, you know, there's a warning here.

Not to be ashamed. Not to be ashamed of the Lord Jesus. And not even to somehow, you know, try and compromise, you know, the truth. When we're faced with a world that denies the Lord Jesus.

Because, as Jesus said, you're either with me or against me. And so, as we see here, John's account. It's a very particular account of all the gospel writers.

It's John who writes in this way that shows, you know, Peter and Jesus and back to Peter. So, we'll begin with Peter. We'll begin with his falsehood.

[ 8 : 07 ] And what do we notice is questioned. It's questioned, first of all, by a servant girl. And then, it's the second section on Peter. It's questioned by a relative of the young man whose ear Peter had cut off just a few moments before when Jesus was arrested.

So, what do we see here? We see Peter. He's come into the courtyard. He's come in with, as we're told here, another disciple, an unnamed disciple. And we can suggest, strongly suggest, that this unnamed disciple is the author of this gospel, is John.

But certainly, this unnamed disciple, this other disciple, he's got obviously some connection with Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas. And so, with John's connections, Peter's been allowed to come into the courtyard.

He's been allowed to watch, yes, from a distance, but watch the events unfold in connection with Jesus' interrogation. And, well, as we see the circumstances, as we see John must have some influence, this unnamed disciple.

We reckon it's John. He persuades the female doorkeeper to allow Peter to come in. And, I mean, you know, you can see that Peter had wanted to be near Jesus.

[ 9 : 28 ] I mean, you know, just a wee while before, he'd said to Jesus, of all else, of all desert you, I won't desert you. And, you know, even the very fact that the time when he struck the high priest's servant's ear, you know, he'd shown, yes, a misplaced zeal, but it's certainly zeal for the Lord.

But as Peter goes into that courtyard, we have to say he's caught off guard. The servant girl asks him a question. And the way that she words the question, it's a question that expects the answer to be no.

You know, we'd put it like this. You weren't with Jesus, were you? You know, you surely weren't one of that man's disciples, were you? And Peter's caught off guard and he just says, I'm not, I'm not.

Who's saying this? I mean, this is Peter. This is Peter who'd been with Jesus for three years. Peter who'd been amongst the closest of the disciples of Jesus.

He'd seen Jesus transfigured on that mountaintop. He'd walked from water to meet with Jesus there on the lake. He says, Peter who at one time had declared to Jesus, to his face, you are the Christ,

the Son of God.

[10:49] And now he's telling the doorkeeper, he's not one of this man's, not one of Jesus' disciples. And before we condemn Peter and judgment, then you, I, have to ask ourselves, have I, have you always maintained that unashamed profession of faith in the Lord Jesus?

Ask yourself this as I ask myself. And I know what my answer is. Ask yourself, have I, have I never hidden my light? Have I never uttered uncompromising words when, when I've been challenged about my faith in the Lord Jesus?

You know the answer as I know my answer. Because I know that I, that many times I'm guilty of denying the Lord. We know all of us, to whether a greater or lesser extent, we have, as Christians, denied our Lord.

And we can say that with shame and say it with, yes, and repent of that sin. Because we have committed deeds of omission. We've omitted to do that which honours the Saviour.

We've omitted to speak words that have, that have denied the Saviour. We've omitted to speak a word for the Lord. The number of times we've hidden behind what we might call a thin screen of social respectability.

[12:27] Rather than be courageous and standing sure and, and up front in your, in your stance for the Lord. You see, any denial of the Lord Jesus, whether it's in word or in action, it's, it's, it's really a denial of the truth.

Because that's what we're seeing here in Peter's case. In Peter's denial of his Lord, he's denying the truth. And in denying the truth, as Peter's doing here, he's siding with the enemies of Jesus. You see that, that reference there in, in verse 18. Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire because it was cold. They were standing and warming themselves, Peter was also with them.

And that's not just a physical statement, you know, where Peter was standing physically. At that point in Peter's life, because of his, you know, denying the Lord Jesus, there's Peter standing with those, being with those, associated with those who were there to condemn Jesus.

Peter wasn't standing, wasn't being associated with the Lord Jesus. Now, of course, we know that later on Peter did repent of his sin, the sin of denial.

[13:44] But that repentance wasn't immediate. You see that in verses 25 to 27. As you see John resuming immediate, well, resuming where he leaves off. We see at verse 18, Peter was with them, standing, warming himself.

And then verse 25, we're resuming that particular point. And what do we see from verse 25? We see Peter falling further and further into that pit, that pit of denial.

When the servants, the officers, they're standing with Peter and they're asking him the same question that the servant girl had asked him. And Peter denies, still denies that he was one of Jesus' disciples.

And then we're told, thirdly, a relative of Malchus, the servant whose ear Peter had cut off. And this relative of Malchus claims that, well, Peter, you were there, weren't you, in the garden with Jesus? Peter denies that as well. Three times Peter denies his Lord. Three times he's denying any relationship that he had with the Lord Jesus. And on three occasions, Peter's scorning the Saviour because of that human pressure, because of his weakness, the weakness of, we might say, a faltering disciple of Jesus.

[15:07] And we're going to ask, what made Peter deny his Lord? I mean, you know, as we've hinted at earlier, I mean, of all the disciples, Peter was the one who had shown most loyalty to Jesus, or certainly had expressed that loyalty more vigorously than the other disciples.

But isn't that so often the case? What do we read elsewhere in Scripture? 1 Corinthians 10, 12, for example. If anyone thinks that he stands, take heed, lest he fall.

And that certainly applies to Peter there, and it applies to every follower of Jesus. You know, when we say that we'll never disown Jesus, or we'll never, ever be ashamed of the Saviour, isn't that a dangerous place to be, that self-righteousness, even that self-pride?

Last Lord's Day morning, we celebrated the Lord's Supper. I pray that it was a blessing to you who partook of the supper. But, you know, in the meal itself, and certainly after the supper, wasn't there even a hint of a spiritual pride that, you know, as if to say, well, no temptation's now going to cause me to fall into sin?

But you know, as I know, the experience of the Christian, you know, when he's on the mountaintop, and he enjoys, she enjoys, you know, has enjoyed that sweet fellowship with the Lord, and enjoyed that fellowship with the Lord's people.

[16:47] And then, and then we take our eyes of the Saviour. We take our eyes away from the Saviour. We're taking our eyes into self. And so often we can come crashing down from that mountaintop.

You see, if you're looking for a spiritual high, and you're looking at that high all the time, that's a danger in itself. Because the dangers in the, you know, you think of the mundane day-to-day things that you do, in that life that you're living, you're seeking to find some kind of compensatory high. And we often do it in things other than the Lord Jesus. And so denying the Lord in our actions, in our words, when we exhibit a heart that really is akin to practical atheism, we can deny our Lord and Saviour so easily.

And we can just go into that spiritual descent. And, you know, we think, well, the first step, as it were, is a light sin. And, of course, there's no such thing as a light sin. Every sin is offensive to God. But, you know, going from a particular point and then getting deeper and deeper into the mire, that continually sinning against God, that continual denial of Him.

[18:14] And then we thank God, that's with Peter. God brings to mind your sin. And He brings to mind the enormity of what you've committed against Him.

And, of course, in Peter's case, it was the rooster. It was the rooster crowing. Remember, Jesus had said before that before the rooster crows, Peter, you will deny me three times.

And we give thanks to God for the ways that He brings to our hearts and our minds these times when we have sinned against Him. It may well be that God brings before you a particular time, a particular text of Scripture.

But it will be a word from the Lord. And it may be that the Lord uses a particular brother or sister in Christ to point out to you your sin. But God will bring you to see that sin that has been in your life and in your heart.

We thank God that God does bring us to see the sinfulness in our hearts. You know, we can live such a lifestyle that denies the Savior.

[19:23] And you see that in Peter's case, even the way the first servant asked that question. You know, you weren't with Jesus, were you? You know, it was always sort of an incredulous statement this girl makes.

You know, Peter wasn't recognized by the servant girl as a disciple of Jesus. And you know, there are times in our lives that people will wonder, are you really a Christian?

And surely a test of your profession is this. Do your neighbors, your family, your friends, maybe your colleagues you work with, do they know that you're a Christian?

Or if you told them that you were a Christian, would they be surprised? Because if you are a Christian, if you profess the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you've got a responsibility to live consistently and to witness for Him.

And yes, when the necessary times come to, yes, we might even say to take risks for the Lord, when you take that stand for truth in a world that rejects the truth.

[20:31] And when you take maybe an unpopular stand, when, yes, you truly do have to obey God rather than men. Some of you have a fairly high social media profile.

Well, when you contribute, are you showing your credentials as a Christian in what you write, what you post? Let's not hide behind these flimsy screens of social respectability.

Be strong in the Lord. Be courageous. Stand for Him. Speak for Him. Be courageous for the Lord. Don't deny Him. Don't deny Him by falsehood. Don't deny Him by words and actions that deny your Savior.

Because it doesn't work out. I mean, there's Peter's falsehood. That gave him no advantage at all. His denial of Jesus served no advantage to him whatsoever.

He sinned. As we say, we know from Scripture that he confessed his sin. He was forgiven by the Lord Jesus. He was forgiven by the Lord of truth.

[21:40] And it's that truth that we see in that middle section, verse 29 to 33, where we see Jesus interrogated by this man, Annas.

Now, remember why this section's placed here. It's in the middle. It's in between the first section, the third section of Peter. Now, Jesus is in this middle section.

We're seeing the centrality of truth. We're seeing Jesus, who is the truth. And we're seeing that contrast between man-centered falsehood and Christ-centered truth.

So, I think we need to break this section down into two parts. We'll look at verse 19 to 21, first of all. And then we'll look at verse 22 to 24. Let's look at verse 19 to 21, first of all.

Let's read them, the verses. The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. Jesus answered him, I've spoken openly to the world.

[ 22 : 40 ] I've always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I've said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me.

For I said to them, they know what I said. What do we see in this first part of this section? Well, it's not just the contrast between the truth of Jesus and the falsehood that Peter expresses.

We see here the truth of Jesus as opposed to the falsehood of Annas. Who's at this point anyway, seen as high priest.

You see, it was utterly illegal what Annas was doing. And Jesus points out to him that Annas, what you are doing is utterly illegal because under Jewish law, Jesus shouldn't have been questioned in the way he was.

Jesus shouldn't have been interrogated before the high priest or Annas acting in this capacity there as high priest. Jesus shouldn't have been asked in the way that he was interrogated without witnesses first being brought to court.

[ 23 : 51 ] And of course, it was only after witnesses were brought and only after their testimony was heard, only then could an interrogation and trial begin. But you see in the passage, that wasn't happening.

Jesus was being put on trial before his Jewish accusers and he was put on trial in a false and an illegal manner. And Jesus knew that. That's why he says to Annas, why do you ask me, ask those who have heard me what I said to them.

They know what I said. Because Jesus knew that witnesses, witness people who heard him speak and heard him preach, people who heard his words of truth would verify that Jesus had done nothing wrong, nothing deserving of punishment.

Jesus was no conspirator who said one thing in secret and another thing in public. Jesus' message was the same wherever he went. And it may well be that Jesus here is echoing the words.

We find in Isaiah 45, 19, I did not speak in secret in a land of darkness. I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, the Jews, seek me in vain. I, the Lord, speak the truth.

[ 25 : 03 ] I declare what is right. But whether it's first century Palestine or 21st century Britain, indeed 21st century world, when the truth is proclaimed, Jesus proclaimed the truth and the truth is proclaimed, there's a violent reaction against the truth.

We see that in verse 22 to 24 when he had said these things. One of the officers standing by struck Jesus by his hand saying, is that how you answer the high priest? Jesus answered him, if what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong.

But if what I said is right, why do you strike me? Anniston sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest. Here's another illegal action that's taken place.

This time, one of the officers. No officer in a place of trial. That person didn't have any legal right to strike somebody on trial.

So you've got an illegal trial and you've got an illegal act of violence. Now, obviously this unnamed officer, he's obviously indignant that Jesus should address Annas in the way that he did.

[ 26 : 23 ] But as we said, the elevated position is not Annas, but it's Jesus. Jesus is maintaining truth against the falsehood before him. Jesus is going to take many other blows to the face before his crucifixion.

He's going to be insulted. He's going to be mocked. But you see here, Jesus maintaining the truth of who he is and what he came to proclaim. And you see that the dignified truth of Jesus and his response there, that truth that echoes through the age.

You know, if what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong, but if what I said is right, why do you strike me? If Jesus, maybe better even saying, since Jesus is the truth.

Since Jesus utters no falsehood. When Jesus is saying today to all around, why are you assaulting me? Why are you criticizing me? Why are you condemning me? Why are you condemning me for what's not false?

That's what we see. We live in a world that maligns Jesus and slanders him. We're in a world where the gospel of Jesus is mocked.

[ 27 : 38 ] We live in a world where the followers of the Lord are condemned because you uphold the truth of God's word. It's that attitude that was expressed some years ago in songwriting, don't believe the truth because you see, the truth hurts.

Truth hurts man's self-centered pride. Truth exposes the heart of man that's altogether wicked.

Truth condemns the guilty.

Truth, you see, hurts pride. Truth exposes evil. And that happens in a world that prefers darkness to light.

We're living in a world where right is called wrong and wrong is called right. But if you know the Lord Jesus, if you know him by faith, you have that privilege that you know the truth, you know him and you know there's nothing false in Jesus.

You know that what he says in his word is correct and you know that you can trust him in every aspect of your life. But not everyone trusts Jesus.

[ 28 : 54 ] Not everyone submits to his word. Not everybody submits to his rule. You see that in verse 24 because the illegal court now takes Jesus away illegally.

He's going to be taken before Caiaphas the high priest. He's going to be bound. I mean he's bound but he hasn't even offered any resistance to his captors. There'd be no witnesses at that first interrogation.

So, you know, there's nothing even there to tell us that Jesus is guilty. So guilty to be bound by his captors and taken to Caiaphas.

He's going to be taken for further questioning and he's going to face further falsehood. There's going to be false witnesses that appear to speak against Jesus and the innocent one will be condemned and he'll be crucified so that you, so that, so that I, the guilty, go free.

John here, John, in writing this gospel, he's focused on the truth of Jesus. The truth of Jesus in the middle of lies and falsehood and opposition and even violence against the Lord.

[ 30 : 16 ] But Jesus remains on course for Calvary. Jesus isn't going to allow even these actions, these words, he's not going to allow the schemes of man to deflect him from the course that he's on, that mission to save sinners.

And surely this is an, it has to be an encouragement. Even when you're facing opposition for being a Christian, even when you're facing the violence of words and even, even actions, when you, you face the wrath of man because you uphold the truth.

Well, look to the Lord Jesus, look to him look to him who suffered for you, look to Jesus who, who remains steadfast in truth, even when all around there was falsehood and a despising of truth.

And yes, be strong in him, remain steadfast in the truth that's the Lord Jesus and continue to bear witness to the truth because as we're told in Scripture and we apply it, we seek to apply it, maybe not very well at times, but know this, that he, he, who honours Jesus, Jesus will honour him.

You who honour Jesus, the Lord will honour you. And so may God add his blessing to all that we've been considering even this day and these events prior to Jesus' crucifixion so that he might have the glory.

[ 31 : 48 ] Amen. Let us pray. Lord, we again come before you in humble thanksgiving. We come before you knowing the sin within our heart, the times, the many times when by word and by action, whether by sins of omission or sins of commission, that we've sinned against heaven and against the earth.

We've sinned against you, Lord, when we've denied our Saviour. And so, Lord, we pray your forgiveness. We pray, Lord, that you will forgive us for these times of denial.

We ask, Lord, that rather than denying the Saviour, that we would deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Jesus. So help us, Lord, we pray, in all our actions and all that we do and all that we say to honour and glorify you.

And we pray, Lord, these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's close now in Psalm 130 on page 421. Psalm 130 on page 421. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried, my voice, Lord, do thou hear unto my supplications' voice give an attentive year.

[ 33 : 05 ] Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, but yet with thee forgivenesses that feared thou mayest be. Psalm 130 to God's praise.

Psalm 130 on page 421. Psalm 130 on page 521. Psalm 130