Discussion Guide – November 1, 2026

An Unjust Trial; A Just God

Matthew 26:57-68

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HOW TO PREPARE

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

RESOURCES

https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/jesus-trial
https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/jesus-answers-his-accusers
https://www.gotquestions.org/Sanhedrin.html

DISCUSSION GUIDE OUTLINE

Matthew 26:57-68

1. An Unjust Trial. Vv. 57-63a, 66
2. A Just and Merciful God. Vv. 63-68

SCRIPTURE (NEW AMERIAN STANDARD BIBLE 1995)

MATTHEW 26:57-68

JESUS BEFORE CAIAPHAS

57 Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together.

58 But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome.

59 Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death.

60 They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward,

61 and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.'"

62 The high priest stood up and said to Him, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?"

63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God."

64 Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

65 Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy;

66 what do you think?" They answered, "He deserves death!"

67 Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him,

68 and said, "Prophesy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 26:57-68.

INTRODUCTION AND MAIN IDEA

1. Have you ever been wrongfully accused? How did that make you feel?

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

I. An Unjust Trial. Vv. 57-63a, 66

The Great Sanhedrin was the supreme court of ancient Israel, made up of 70 men and the high priest. They met during the day on every day except for the Sabbath (Saturday). Jesus was arrested on Thursday night.

2. Read John 18:12-13, 19-24. Jesus is first taken that night to Annas. Annas was the high priest from 6 to 15 A.D. before he was deposed by the Romans. At the time Jesus was arrested, Annas' son-in-law, Caiaphas, was the actual high priest, yet Annas wielded massive influence behind the scenes. Consider John 18:20-21, why were Annas' questions a ruse? Did not Annas and the other priests have every opportunity to question Jesus's teachings in front of the people?

3. Read John 18:14 and recall Matthew 26:3-5. What was Caiaphas' plan? Did he and the other priests care if Jesus really was the Messiah or not? Did truth matter to them, or were they wanting to just get rid of a rival?

4. Read John 7:50-51. What advice did Nicodemus give to the priests?

5. Consider Matthew 26:57-60. What all was improper about the "trial" of Jesus before the Sanhedrin? (Night, false testimony). Did they really care if what Jesus said was true?

6. Consider Matthew 26:61-63. At least two witnesses had to agree to establish a charge. The charge was that Jesus said "I can destroy the sanctuary of God and rebuild it in three days." Why was this not a false statement?

7. Consider Matthew 26:62-63a. Whose burden was it to establish if Jesus was a false teacher? Was there any reason He needed to answer the false testimony against Him?

II. A Just and Merciful God. Vv. 63-68

8. Consider Matthew 26:63b-65. What is ironic about Caiaphas commanding Jesus to do anything? What is the significance of Jesus' response claiming to be the "Son of Man"? How does the response by the Sanhedrin in verse 65 demonstrate that they considered Jesus to be claiming to be God incarnate?

9. Consider Matthew 26:66 and Read Leviticus 24:16. Physical death was a just penalty established by God for someone who committed blasphemy in the presence of the Sanhedrin. Why was it not blasphemy for Jesus to say He was essentially God? Did the Sanhedrin violate Leviticus 24:16 by condemning Jesus to death? Read Luke 23:50-51 (several dissented from the verdict because it was unjust).

10. Consider Matthew 26:66 and Romans 6:23. Who really deserves death: Jesus or us?

11. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 and 1 Peter 1:19-20. How did God maintain His just nature and still save us? Was it His plan all along? So, who was really in control during this farse of a trial, the Sanhedrin or Jesus?

12. Do you appreciate the fact that a just God could rightfully condemn you, but instead, choose to have Himself stand condemned on your behalf to save you? What should that motivate you to do practically?

COMMENTARY (FROM ESV STUDY BIBLE)

Matt. 26:57–27:10 The Jewish Trial of Jesus. Matthew narrates the events surrounding the trial of Jesus by the Jewish authorities: his stand before the Sanhedrin (26:57–68), Peter's denials (26:69–75), the condemnation and deliverance of Jesus to Pilate (27:1–2), and Judas's remorse and suicide (27:3–10).

Matt. 26:57–58 The headquarters of Caiaphas the high priest was likely a palatial mansion, probably on the eastern slope of the "upper city" of Jerusalem overlooking the temple area (see note on John 18:24).

Matt. 26:59–60 The Sanhedrin tried to find false witnesses who would credibly testify that Jesus had violated the law, so that they could find him guilty as quickly as possible.

Matt. 26:59 The whole council ("Sanhedrin") need not denote all 70 members but may just indicate those hastily assembled in the middle of the night (23 members made a quorum). "Sanhedrin" (Gk. synedrion) could refer either to a local Jewish tribunal (e.g., "council," 5:22; "courts," 10:17) or, as here, to the supreme ecclesiastical court ("council") of the Jews, centered in Jerusalem. The Romans were ultimately in control of all judicial proceedings but allowed their subjects some freedom to try their own cases.

Matt. 26:61–62 I am able to destroy the temple of God. This saying, misquoted and taken out of context (cf. John 2:19–21), was easily distorted by Jesus' opponents.

Matt. 26:63 silent. Jesus' silence fulfills Isa. 53:7 and places the responsibility for his death squarely on his accusers. tell us if you are the Christ. Caiaphas wants Jesus to admit to this charge so that he can be accused of insurrection against Rome and tried before Pilate for treason.

Matt. 26:64 You have said so. See note on v. 25. Jesus declares that he is not only the human Messiah anticipated by the Jews but also the divine Son of Man (see Dan. 7:13–14; note on Matt. 8:20) who sits at the right hand of God (Ps. 110:1–2) and who will come on the clouds in power to reign over the earth.

Matt. 26:65 tore his robes. Normally prohibited for the high priest (Lev. 10:6; 21:10), but this astounding claim by Jesus evokes a vehement response. blasphemy. A reference to Jesus' claim of divine status as the Son of Man.

Matt. 26:66 If Jesus is lying by claiming to be divine, then indeed he deserves death from the standpoint of the Jewish law (see Lev. 24:10–23). The irony is that he will be executed for telling the truth.

Matt. 26:67–68 The Jewish leaders' physical abuse of Jesus and their mocking question, "Who is it that struck you?" demonstrate their disbelief in his prophetic gifts and thus their scorn for his claims to divinity (v. 64).