

Abandoned at the Gate

Songs of David: Volume 2, Part 10

Psalm 69

In our last study I paraphrased the words of John Phillips, the British expositor, written in his exposition of Psalm 69 where he wrote, “In the Gospels we have the facts about Christ in His suffering; but in Psalm 69 we have the feelings of Christ in His suffering – and what feelings they were.”¹

We began our look at just a couple of prophetic phrases from this Messianic Psalm – a Psalm that ultimately pointed to the coming Savior.

We noted in our last study, how *verses 1-3* revealed the deep feelings of utter anguish in our Lord’s lonely weeping.

Let me add that nowhere did this take place quite like the agony of our Lord in Garden of Gethsemane. David records in *verse 3* the feelings of our Lord as he writes, “*I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched; my eyes fail while I wait for my God.*”

We tend to have a picture in our minds – typically the one made famous by Heinrich Hofmann in 1890 who painted Jesus rather calmly praying in the Garden.

The Gospel by Mark informs us that Jesus fell to the ground and began to pray - imperfect tense – which means He fell to the ground and prayed; got up went a little further along and then He fell down and prayed again; He picked Himself back up staggered around a few more steps and fell to the ground again and prayed,

Hebrews chapter 5 refers to this same scene, and it informs us that Jesus prayed with loud cries and tears.

I’m sure many of you have seen that rather famous painting – where Jesus is kneeling in the Garden, His hands are folded in prayer as He looks up to heaven.

Now if you have that picture hanging on a wall – that’s okay – the Lord may very well have prayed that way some other time.

But not in the Garden.

David in *Psalm 69* informs us that the agony includes the fact that He has been abandoned. He has become hated without a cause – notice again *verse 4 – those who hate me without a cause are*

more than the hairs of my head; those who would destroy me are powerful being wrongfully my enemies.

There are no calm folded hands here – this is the agony of Jesus who fully understands the price He is about to pay, and the agony of His coming separation from His Father; and – get this – He is deeply wounded as a human being over the fact that He is hated without a cause.

He feels the injustice of these unfolding events and as fully God – *and* fully human – he agonizes over His abandonment.

David prophetically hints at the unjust proceedings against Him – notice *verse 11. When I made sackcloth my clothing – that is, He’s effectively stripped and covered in mourning and anguish – when was that? 11b. When I became a byword to them.*

The idea there is someone who becomes mocked and insulted and ridiculed.

Notice verse 12 – Those who sit in the gate talk about me.

In other words, he is being mocked and ridiculed by those in leadership.

The gate here is a reference to those in Israel who held positions of authority – and in Israel, the highest authority resided in the Sanhedrin and the High Priest who carried out, their verdict, when it related to religious matters.

The *Gate* is the place where justice and truth was supposed to be protected; but for our Lord, the *gate* virtually abandoned Him in the most terrible ways imaginable.

Let’s retrace the facts provided in the Gospel accounts for a few minutes.

Turn to *John 18* . . . (pause) . . . hold your finger in Psalm 69 . . . I probably said that way too late . . .

John 18:12 tells us that Jesus is taken from the Garden to the wealthy estate of Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.

It isn’t hard to understand why he wanted to see Jesus.

Annas was the most powerful Jew in Jerusalem. He had served as the High Priest some twenty years earlier, yet still had control of virtually everything religious in Jerusalem.

Annas controlled the Temple system, the money changing fees and the selling of sacrificial animals – he oversaw, as we discussed in our last study, the system that extorted as much as 400 million dollars a year from relatively poor people.

Annas had set the entire system up . . . and Annas wanted at this Galilean carpenter . . . this man who had ripped off the mask and called the Temple a Den of thieves.

Now, before we look further, you need to understand that the Hebrew system of jurisprudence was a matter of national pride. The Jews prided themselves on their legal system; and most of all, their Supreme Court - the Sanhedrin.

The Sanhedrin sometimes referred to as the Senate – was composed of 71 men. 23 priests, 23 scribes, 23 elders; the appointed high priest by the Romans and the true High Priest, who would serve for life.

It's interesting that in *Mark 14 Jesus tells his disciples that He will have to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed.*

In other words, Jesus was informing them that he knew He would soon stand before the Gate – as it were – before the Supreme Court of Israel and Jesus already knew their verdict would be the death penalty.

But in the chaos of how all of this unfolds, the Supreme Court actually violated several of their laws in order to bring their verdict – and when we take a closer look, it helps us understand the agony of Christ all the more – the innocent One – of whom David writes in *Psalms 69 – He will bear unjust reproach and dishonor will cover His face.*

And in the process – the Sanhedrin, will violate their own law.

Let me show you:

1. First of all, it was against Jewish law for any trial to be held secretly at night.

Which is exactly what Jesus pointed out to Annas as he's being interrogated in the middle of the night – Jesus said to him in *John 18:20b, I have spoken openly to the world . . . I spoke nothing in secret . . . hint hint . . . so Why do you question Me?*

In other words, why are you questioning me in secret? Let's take this out in the open.

Turn to Matthew chapter 26. (you don't have to keep your finger in John's Gospel)

By the time you get to Matthew account in *chapter 26 and verse 57, they lead Jesus away from Annas and to Caiaphas where the Sanhedrin has been secretly convened just after midnight.*

With the exception of Annas – who's just been rebuked by the Lord, the 70 have convened.

So get this picture . . . you have the members of the Supreme Court, coming by torchlight in the middle of the night to the house of Joseph Caiaphas, the High Priest.

2. Secondly, another law they violate is the law that never required the accused to speak during the trial.

The Hebrews prided themselves in defense attorneys and the rights of the accused. They were never forced to speak but had the right to be defended.

And keep that in mind that whenever Jesus is questioned – because if it related to providing any kind of self-defense, the Lord stood there silently.

Matthew throws in the clear violation of this law, by the High Priest himself – *verse 62 - And the high priest stood up and said to Him "Do You make no answer?" Notice verse 63a. But Jesus kept silent!*

This is the silence, not only of the Lamb who is smitten without a self-defense (Isaiah prophesied); this is also the silence of integrity where Jesus is making all of these men painfully aware that they are breaking the law in this illegal proceeding.

And let me just stop here for a moment: what is the greatest insult you've ever had to endure? What is your deepest injury? What accusations have you felt which was not even close to the truth?

Doesn't the desire to speak on your own behalf just sort of bubble up to the surface . . . don't we all eventually get around to defending ourselves – and telling those people off?

Jesus Christ is in the right . . . but He's willing to be wronged. And He remained silent.

And how did He feel? He desperately trusts His Father as He prays in *Psalms 69:17. Oh . . . ransom me because of my enemies! Thou dost know my reproach and my shame and my dishonor: all my adversaries are before Thee.*

That's how He felt.

Now, the Sanhedrin is desperate for witnesses against Jesus.

They are desperate to end this trial before the sunrise reveals their dealings in the dark.

So they violated yet another law.

3. The third law they violated was the law that two witnesses would have to agree exactly on their testimony

Now in Jewish law, during these days, there were no prosecuting attorney's – only the witnesses. And the Sanhedrin served as the defense – making sure the witnesses were telling the truth.

And one of the things they would have already done is question the witnesses separately to ensure their testimony was correct.

You've probably heard of the three high school students who decided to skip morning classes; and when they finally arrived, they told the Principal that they'd had a flat tire. He immediately sent them to 3 different corners of his office, gave each of them a piece of paper and a pencil and told them to write down which tire it was.

The testimony of the witnesses had to agree.

Can you imagine the horror of this text – look back in Matthew 26 and verse 59. Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus in order that they might put Him to death.

Let that sink in – they kept trying to obtain false testimony.

Can you imagine?! “Hey, we're looking for someone to step forward and lie about this man so we can put Him to death.”

The almost comedic element here is that they can't seem to find two men who can lie about the same thing.

Mark's Gospel account informs us that ***many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent.***

Listen, where *do* you get reliable witnesses in the middle of the night?!

4. Another law is violated: fourthly, the Sanhedrin was not to demand the accused to incriminate themselves

We today call it, “pleading the 5th” – even our own courts have special considerations against self-incrimination.

Hebrew law allowed Jesus to remain silent.

But it's at this moment that Caiaphas does something very unusual . . . this is his last chance against Jesus before dawn.

Look at verse 63b. 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.”

What Caiaphas does here is place Jesus under oath – setting due process aside – and demands that Jesus potentially incriminate himself.

Now Jesus could have remained silent – it was an illegal requirement.

But it is only now, where Jesus will speak.

Listen, just as he helped the soldiers arrest Him in the Garden; Jesus will now effectively help the Sanhedrin condemn Him.

And so, ***verse 64.*** Jesus speaks: ***Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself; (said what? look back at verse 63c. tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God - the Messiah, God come in the flesh; Jesus responds, “You said it – in other words, That's exactly who I am). . . then He adds v. 64. Nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”***

He says, not only am I the Son of God – as you said – the anointed Messiah – but I am the fulfillment of every Messianic Psalm in your Hebrew collection; and I will also one day be the fulfillment of the Prophet Daniel's vision of the great Prince of God who descends to earth to rule and reign.

Jesus effectively says, “I am going to come again and judge the world as God incarnate.”

You know what Jesus was doing here – as He finally speaks – He is giving them all the information they want and need to condemn Him for blasphemy – claiming to be God in the flesh.

Beloved, this midnight, illegal courtroom drama reveals the amazing, unstoppable love and purpose of Christ in fulfilling the plan of our Triune God (Father, Son, and Spirit) to come to earth to bear our sins in His own body on the tree.

5. There's a 5th law the Sanhedrin will violate – here it is: The death penalty could only be delivered after the Court spent a day of fasting.

Jewish records reveal that none of the 71 would eat anything, or drink anything. It symbolized that the Supreme Court would be agonizing over the future of a man condemned to die.

But for this Sanhedrin, the verdict is immediate. The High Priest called for a vote and – notice in *verse 66* – he asks the court, “*What do you think?*” *And they answered and said, “He is deserving of death!”*

No day of deliberation . . . no fasting or praying for wisdom.

Not here.

Look at what actually happens next. *v. 67. Then they spat in his face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him and said “Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?”*

Mark’s Gospel explains, “They blindfolded him and beat him with their fists.”

- Beloved, there are certain scenes that always turn my stomach – a news report or a video captured on youtube or a newspaper article about someone abusing their authority;
- an officer of the law beating a defenseless person;
- a court negating testimony on a technicality
- someone suffering in prison because those in authority hid evidence that would have freed him;
- or a jury member or judge who’s been bribed into doing the wrong thing.

Can you imagine, the Supreme court of the United States, condemning a criminal to die, and then, robes and all, getting out of their seats and coming around to where the accused is standing and after blindfolding Him, begin to spit on him and slap him and hit him and mock him?

The Supreme Court of Israel has degenerated into a vicious mob of 70 men - spitting, hitting, cursing, and mocking.

Who were the real blasphemers this day? Who were the accused before God? The Sanhedrin, and the nation they represented.

And what was going through the mind and heart of Jesus? In *Psalms 69*, David reveals the Lord’s feelings back in *Psalms 69:20 – Reproach has broken my heart, and I am so sick; And I looked for sympathy, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none.*

Imagine – the One around who’s throne the hosts of heaven had once chanted in His presence, “Holy, Holy, Holy”; the One for whom the angels filled to sky to sing – in that heavenly reveal – *For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

And now He is cursed and vilified and mocked and beaten and abandoned by the Gate – the leaders of His beloved nation.

David moves us from Gethsemane and scenes of the Unjust Trial to the very hill of Calvary.

He writes in *verse 21 of this Psalm this amazing Messianic prophecy; David writes, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*

A very strange text, in David’s day, but not at the scene of a crucifixion.

Crucifixion was not practiced by Israel; it was practiced by the pagan nations. The method of execution in Israel – was stoning – it was quick, with almost immediate unconsciousness and then death. Crucifixion was long torture of the Roman world.

God fearing women would often visit this standing place of execution. We know from history that the Romans crucified more than a 1,000 men the year Jesus hung on the cross.

And these women would come and offer the victims of this slow and tortuous death a mixture with wine that would serve as an anesthetic – Jesus refused it. He refused to drink it and dull His mind – in fact; He had several significant things to say – not the least of which was an everlasting pardon given to the repentant thief hanging next to Him.

But eventually He cried out in thirst, and *John* records for us in *chapter 19 and verse 29* that *a jar full of sour wine [or vinegar] was nearby; and they dipped a sponge into the jar and then put it on a branch of hyssop, and brought it up to His mouth.*

It is wonderfully ironic and in no way a coincidence that according to Old Testament command it was hyssop that brushed the blood of the sacrificial lamb onto the doorposts of the slave quarters in Egypt the night of that first Passover.

It was hyssop that was used to connect with the ceremonial cleansing of animals who were going to be sacrificed.

And it is hyssop that gives a drink to the Lamb of God – the final Passover Lamb that would deliver every person in bondage to sin by His sacrifice on our behalf.

But isn’t it striking that God the Son, in all of His humanity would cry out, “I am thirsty.”

Imagine, Jesus began his public ministry in the wilderness hungry; He now ends His ministry on the cross, thirsty.²

He began His ministry hungry, and He ends His ministry thirsty!

So that you and I who hunger and thirst for forgiveness and a clear conscience and an eternal

hope and the righteousness of Christ can become our everlasting satisfaction.

Not too much earlier, John informed us that Jesus had announced, ***“If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink . . . and he will never thirst again (John 4).***

As I tracked this prophetic thought from Psalm 69 through the Gospels, it struck me that because Jesus experienced hunger and thirst, every believer will one day enjoy, John describes in ***Revelation 7***, as a place where they ***will hunger no more, neither thirst anymore . . . for the Lamb will be their Shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life.***

Have you ever thought about the fact that the last invitation to mankind from the Lord, in ***Revelation 22:17 – and let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life . . . take it without cost.***

Because Jesus Christ was willing to hunger and thirst for us.

- So Jesus is tried before the Gate so that you and I will never have to be tried before the court of heaven.
- He is condemned to die by man’s injustice so that you and I will never be condemned to die by heaven’s justice.

Before whom none of us would stand a chance.

- He experienced the wrath of religious men so that all who believe in Him will

never experience the wrath of a righteous God.

And for those who believe in Him, here’s our future; ***Psalm 69 ends, Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and everything that moves in them; For God will save Zion . . . and the descendants of His servants will inherit it . . . and those who love His name, will dwell in it.***

Here’s a wonderful Hymn of praise that doesn’t make it into the Christmas season – but it covers the breadth of this Messianic Psalm, and I think it is a perfect summary for this season:

*“Man of Sorrows,” what a name
For the Son of God who came;
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah! What a Savior!*

*Lifted up was He to die,
“It is finished” was His cry;
Now in Heaven, exalted high,
Hallelujah! What Savior!*

*When He comes, our glorious King,
All His ransomed home to bring;
Then anew this song we’ll sing:
Hallelujah! What Savior!*³

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 12/13/2015 by Stephen Davey.

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1 John Phillips, *Exploring Psalms: Volume One* (Loizeaux Brothers, 1988), p. 554

2 Phillips, p. 566

3 *Hallelujah, What Savior*, Phillip P. Bliss