

# The Slapping of Our Savior

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## Introduction

### The Text

<sup>63</sup> Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. <sup>64</sup> They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, “Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?” <sup>65</sup> And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.

<sup>66</sup> When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, <sup>67</sup> “If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe, <sup>68</sup> and if I ask you, you will not answer. <sup>69</sup> But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” <sup>70</sup> So they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?” And he said to them, “You say that I am.” <sup>71</sup> Then they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.” (Luke 22:63–71)

### It Gets Worse

- A. Last week we spent the morning reflecting upon Peter’s denial of Jesus. And, as grievous as such a thing would be, it’s as nothing compared to what we have before us now—what our Savior is enduring here.
  - 1. Peter, however cowardly and faithless, still would prove to have a soft heart towards His Lord in the end.
  - 2. But these men pictured before us now are as hard as stone.
- B. The shorthand agenda for us this morning is quite simple: (1) We’re going to look first at the Two Scenes that compose this text; (2) and then we’ll draw out and consider Two Implications for us in particular.

## (1) Two Scenes

- A. Our text here can be divided two scenes:
  - 1. The first is there in [vv. 63-65](#) and it’s where Jesus is being mocked and ridiculed for His claims to be a prophet, the Prophet, as we’ll see—One speaking the very words of YHWH.
  - 2. The second is found there in [vv. 66-71](#) (the end of the chapter) where Jesus, we could say, is being mocked and ultimately condemned for His claims to be the Christ—the Son of Man, the Son of God, in the fullest sense of the terms.
- B. So both deal with a sort of mockery from these wicked men and both center in on matters of Christology, on who Jesus truly is.

1. And while in each case our Savior is being treated as though He were something much less than He claimed, we will come to find in both instances, in both scenes, as we work them out, that He is significantly and surprisingly so much more!

C. So let's check these scenes out now one at a time . . .

### Scene #1: Jesus Is Mocked and Ridiculed As a Prophet (vv. 63-65)

A. In v. 63 we read that: "the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him."

1. Who these men were, we're not entirely sure, maybe they were the temple guards, maybe they were some of that band of Roman soldiers that had accompanied Judas to Gethsemane as John tells us (John 18:3), maybe a mix of both.

- a. But whatever the case the point to settle in on here is that they "were mocking as they beat him."

B. The Greek word *empaizō*, translated "mocking" here, literally means "to dance around (someone)" with the derivative sense of scorning, ridiculing, laughing at them. You can picture it, right?

1. You know I live in south San Jose here, and our house is just a block away from the foothills here. And on some summer nights, we'll have the windows open, and from somewhere out in the darkness, we hear it: the howling of coyotes as they hunt down and encircle their prey. It's one of the eeriest sounds you'll ever hear.

- a. And I imagine something of the sort on analogy to what's taking place in this scene. Jesus is as prey to these men. They are dancing about him, howling and cackling, taking bites out of his flesh, wounding Him for the sheer fun of it.

- i. The other Synoptics report that the guards "spit in his face . . . struck him . . . [and] slapped him" (Matt 26:67; cf. Mark 14:65).

- ii. But Luke summarizes all of this in a single word, "they beat him" (Luke 22:63).

C. And this beating and this mockery, it all seems to have centered in on the idea of Jesus as a prophet. So we keep reading in v. 64: "They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, 'Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?'"

1. The idea here is: "We've heard people say you're a prophet, we've even heard you liken yourself to such, well, prove it . . . smack . . . which one of us hit you?"

D. Now, some quick background on this . . .

1. Consider the story of Elijah for a moment, where Ahaziah, king of Israel at the time, is trying to bring him in and so he sends these soldiers out to get him, fifty of these guys. And Elijah's sitting all peacefully up on top of some hill, and the captain of these men says to him: " <sup>9b</sup> O man of God, the king says, 'Come down.' <sup>10</sup> But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, 'If I am a

man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.’ Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty” (2 Kings 1:9b-10). And so the king tries again and the same thing happens to another fifty.

- a. But you caught it, right? “If I am a man of God, if I am a true prophet of God, let fire come down, you can’t get me, you can’t tie me up, I don’t care how many soldiers you send my way. YHWH is on my side.”
  - i. And yet here is Jesus . . . in chains. The soldiers came, the soldiers seized, the soldiers mocked and beat, and there isn’t any fire coming down from heaven. As far as they can tell Jesus doesn’t even have the courage nor the strength even to speak.

(1) Conclusion: “This is no man of God, this is no true prophet. Look, when I hit Him, He can’t do a thing about it.”

2. Or what about Moses. You remember, perhaps, the Jews in Jesus’ day were looking for this prophet promised by Moses back in [Deut. 18:15](#) when he said, near the end of his life and ministry there: “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen . . .”

- a. And as Jesus was doing miracles and all these other things, the people were starting to get excited: “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world” ([John 6:14](#); cf. [7:40](#)). He’s going to be our new Moses. He’s going to take down, not Pharaoh, but Caesar. He’s going to part the waters and redeem us out from the house of slavery. He’s going to provide for us, bread from heaven, water from a rock if need be. He’s going to lead us back into the freedom as the children of God in the land of Promise!” They had high hopes.

- i. And yet here is Jesus . . . in chains. What happened to taking down the enemy? What happened to the plagues and the judgment of God and all of this? There’s no power here. It’s pathetic. Whoever thought He’d be a prophet like Moses was dead wrong.

- E. But here’s the great irony and great profundity in all of this. The suffering and shame of Jesus here, far from undermining His identity as a prophet of God, it actually establishes and vindicates it.

1. For Jesus had spoken of this very moment, indeed He’d prophesied of it all in advance. Do you remember, He began to share with His disciples of His coming demise as far back as [Luke 9:22](#): “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” He said it, long before it ever happened.

- a. The mockery, the beatings, the games these men are playing, they think it all is foolhardy proof against His claims to be a prophet of God, when in reality it is the unmistakable evidence of it!

- F. As they blaspheme Him for being no prophet, they prove him to be a prophet unlike any other.

1. Yes, Jesus was a prophet like Elijah but He was also a Prophet in a category all His own. He did not call down fire upon His enemies. He gave His life in love for His enemies. The fire fell on Him.
  - a. What do you think is trying to be communicated in John’s gospel, when Judas, the Jews, and their soldiers come to grab Him in Gethsemane, and they say: “We’re looking for Jesus of Nazareth,” and He says “I Am,” (John 18:5) and at His word all the whole crowd of them draw back and fall to the ground—what’s that?
    - i. He’s saying: “I could destroy you right now, I am a man of God, YHWH is with Me, I Am YHWH, but I’ve not come to destroy you, I’ve come to die for you.”
2. Yes, Jesus was a prophet like Moses, the Prophet who was to come, but He was also a Prophet in a category all His own. He wouldn’t call down plagues upon Caesar or His enemies. The plagues would come down upon Him, in their place.
  - a. He’s the Passover Lamb, slaughtered so we go free. He’s the bread from heaven, broken for us. He’s the Rock struck from which rivers of living water flow forth. He’s our redemption from slavery to Satan and sin. He’s our pathway into the freedom of the children of God in the Land of Promise, a land flowing with milk and honey—a land not found in this world but in the world to come.

G. He is a prophet, not just like Elijah or like Moses, He is the Prophet far superior to them. This is why I say though they thought He was so much less than He claimed, truly He is so much more!

## Scene #2: Jesus Is Mocked and Condemned As the Christ (vv. 66-71)

- A. We move along now to Scene #2, and here we watch as Jesus is dragged before the Sanhedrin—the Supreme Court for the Jewish people, composed of seventy men—some elders, some chief priests, and some scribes, with the High Priest sitting at the head of it all.
  1. This court was established in an effort to pursue and maintain justice and righteousness in the name of YHWH, and yet here we see it is leveraged, ironically, for precisely the opposite.
- B. What we have with Jesus here is not genuine interest in justice and the truth, it’s what you’d call a mock trial, put on to give an air of legitimacy to the evil these men have already committed to seeing through in their hearts.
  1. Indeed, the other gospel writers tell us that these men had been busy through the night cooking up their plot and scrambling for any scrap of evidence that could be used to convict and, hence, kill Jesus. Luke, it seems to me, condenses all this material into the verses we have now before us.
- C. I say this was a mock trial, a profound miscarriage of justice, for a number of reasons, but one has to do the sheer illegality of all their actions here.

1. Now, we know something of how Jewish courts would function from the Mishnah, the oral tradition of the Jews, codified in around 200 A.D. or so. And if we are to assume that what we have there was somewhat similarly in place back in the 30s A.D. with Jesus, then the discrepancies become unmistakably flagrant.
  - a. For example, the Mishnah states that it is illegal for the Sanhedrin meet at night, which we know from the other gospel accounts that they did.
  - b. Likewise, it is illegal for them to meet in the high priest's home. But, again, from the other gospels, we know that is precisely what they did.
  - c. Likewise, it is illegal for the Sanhedrin to meet on a feast day, and yet, here they are, gathering on Passover.
  - d. Furthermore, the Mishnah states that both sides of a case must be heard and yet here Jesus is tried without defense, accused without real witnesses.
  - e. And, finally, in capital cases, in cases where the death sentence was on the table, a second hearing would be required on the following day, to give time for more evidence and things to come forward. And yet they're ramrodding the case through—working through the night, sealing the deal in the early morning, to get it over to Rome and get Him on a cross before the Sabbath and things get pushed back any further.
    - i. So, listen, there is perhaps an air of legitimacy here—it might look on the outside as though they are genuinely pursuing justice and equity—but pull back the curtains a bit, and everything about it sniffs of scandal.
  
- D. As I've said, they already made up their minds about Jesus. They wanted Him gone. They just had to figure how to do it.
  1. He was upsetting stuff for these men from the very beginning, but things seem to have especially reached a breaking point in [John 11](#), after Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and the people are all amazed with Him and going after Him: “<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him,<sup>46</sup> but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.<sup>47</sup> So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, ‘What are we to do? For this man performs many signs.<sup>48</sup> If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.’<sup>49</sup> But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all.<sup>50</sup> Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.’<sup>51</sup> He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation,<sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.<sup>53</sup> So from that day on they made plans to put him to death” (vv. 45–53).
    - a. There's jealousy here. There's love for the things of this world here. There's thirst for power here. What isn't here is an interest in God or justice or truth.
  
- E. They want to kill him. That's what this mock trial is about. How do we do it? “<sup>66</sup> When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said,<sup>67a</sup> ‘If you are the Christ, tell us’” (Luke 22:66-67a).

1. I think they start here with this issue of Jesus as the Christ because it's what will get Him in trouble with the Romans.
  - a. You'll recall, perhaps, that the Romans at this point it seems had revoked the Jews right to capital punishment—that had to be run through them. So there's two layers to this false conviction: It's got to stick with the Jews, and it's especially got to stick with the Romans.
    - i. The Christ, as Jews understood it, was thought to be the coming son of David who would sit on the throne and rule, a great king of the Jews. David, you remember, was the guy who ran the Gentiles out of Jerusalem and set it up as the great capital city of the Jewish people. And the idea of Jesus claiming to be a king like David, of course, would be a threat to Caesar. And where Caesar is threatened, he doesn't hesitate to wield the sword.

(1) "If you are the Christ, tell us."

F. Jesus knows what they're doing, of course He does. And so we read: ["67b But he said to them, 'If I tell you, you will not believe, 68 and if I ask you, you will not answer'"](#) (vv. 67b-68).

1. In other words: "This isn't a genuine question. Your mind about Me is already made up. Your heart is as hard as granite. There's nothing for Me to say."

G. But, now, while He won't answer their question directly, He does have one last thing to say, and what a statement it is, v. 69: ["But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God."](#)

1. With this majestic statement Jesus is alluding to two OT texts: [Dan. 7:13](#) and [Ps. 110:1](#). When you bring these two together it's spark to tinder . . . the effect is explosive!
  - a. When Jesus refers to Himself as ["the Son of Man"](#) He is hearkening back to [Dan. 7:13](#) where Daniel, in a vision, after seeing all these frightening beasts that represent the power-hungry kingdoms of this world, he sees One who is more powerful still, called ["the Son of Man"](#): [" 13 I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed"](#) (vv. 13–14).
  - b. When Jesus says I'll soon ["be seated at the right hand of the power of God"](#) He's hearkening back to [Ps. 110:1](#), where this figure whom David refers to as ["my Lord"](#) is invited up by ["the LORD \[YHWH\]"](#) who says: ["Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."](#)
    - i. It's a picture of the vindication and exaltation, the power and authority, yes even the divinity of Jesus. "Am I the Christ? You better believe it. But I'm

so much more. I'm David's Son and David's Lord. I'm the Son of David and the Son of Man . . . and the Son of God."

(1) That's why these men catch fire with fury in these moments, v. 70: "So they all said, 'Are you the Son of God, then?' And he said to them, 'You say that I am.'" Guilty as charged, in the best possible way.

H. So what's He doing? If He's the son of David and the Son of Man and the Son of God, why is He in chains, why's He putting up with this?

1. Well, it goes back to [John 11](#) and what the high priest Caiaphas unwittingly prophesied: "[I]t is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." He was talking about killing Jesus so they could keep their stuff, their worldly power and possessions and not lose it to the Romans.

a. But right there, even as they're cooking up this sinister and depraved plan, God is moving forward with a plan of His own. "You're right Caiaphas, it's better that one man should die for the people, and that's what I've sent my Son to do."

i. " <sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" ([John 3:16–17](#)).

(1) They are looking to kill Jesus but Jesus is looking to save them.

I. This is why I say though they thought He was so much less than He claimed, truly He is so much more! His death on a cross is not foolproof evidence that He is not the Christ. It is rather His crowning accomplishment as the Christ. So much more!

## (2) Two Implications

A. I've got two relatively simple implications I want to draw out from this for us and then we'll close. There's an implication for our Worship and an implication for our Witness.

### Implication #1: Our Worship

A. We may be prone to read of these wicked men here and think it could never be so with us. But here is where we must let the finger of Nathan the prophet turn back in on ourselves. "You are the man!" ([2 Sam. 12:7](#)).

1. We are not permitted to excuse ourselves from the conversation here. No, the call is rather to examine ourselves and ask God to reveal and help and have mercy on us, for we do the same sorts of things.

a. The question isn't whether this stuff is in us, but where is it in us?

- B. As we keep reading in Luke’s gospel, this is the point of what we see go down—everyone’s involved in this. It’s not just a Jewish leader thing.
1. There’s Jews and Gentiles, clergymen and laity, politicians and paupers, soldiers and civilians, rich and poor, etc.—and they’re all ganging up as a wolf pack around our Savior. Again, this isn’t just a Jewish leader thing . . . this is a human being thing.
    - a. So don’t excuse yourself, examine yourself. And don’t ask whether, ask where.
- C. And I suppose the nub of the issue is simply this: Are we genuinely seeking and surrendered to God? Are our hearts open and soft to Him?
1. Do we have ideas of who God should be and what He should be doing in our lives right now, and He’s not delivering, and we’re mad about it—He’s not helping us get what we want, He’s standing in the way of it? So we’re wrestling with Him, even slapping Him about it.
- D. I mean that’s essentially the big problem with these guys here, right? “This isn’t what a prophet should look like.” “This isn’t what the Christ should be doing.” These guys are strangling the Son because they think He’s a threat to what they desire when in actuality He’s trying to give them all the things they truly desire. “Satisfaction isn’t found in power, and money, and stuff. It’s found in God. And I’m here to get you back there.”
1. He’s always up to more than we think.
    - a. And that’s always the case. Not just here in [Luke 22](#) but in your life right now. You may feel like I don’t get God, I don’t even think I like God right now, but we’re given these pictures in the Scriptures of how God, even in the midst of what feels like massive letdown, He can turn it all for unimaginable good.
- E. Don’t slap or strangle the Son, surrender to Him, trust Him.

## Implication #2: Our Witness

- A. I think Jesus here models something very important for those of us who want to be an influence for the gospel in our city, which should be all of us right—every saint is sent.
1. But in our increasingly post-Christian culture here (which the Bay Area, last I checked was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> on this in America) we find that we hit dead ends with folks, right? Where they’ve already heard it, they’ve made up their mind about it, they’re not interested in hearing what Christians have to say. How much more so now that evangelicals always come off so ridiculous in the news and things.
    - a. We try to share, we want to speak—the gospel is news composed of words about what Christ has done before it is anything else—but sometimes we run up against people like these Jewish leaders here, where they’ve already decided, Jesus is a joke.



- B. What do we do? Yell louder? No! We love harder. When they won't listen to our words about the cross, man we show them the cross in the way that we lay down our lives for them in love. When they won't listen to your words, preach with your life.
1. This is what we see with Jesus, right? He knows of the futility of entering into discussion with those who have already made up their mind, who's hearts are hard: “<sup>67b</sup> If I tell you, you will not believe,<sup>68</sup> and if I ask you, you will not answer” (vv. 67b-68). “I'm not going to talk to you about this anymore. But I tell you what, I will die for you.”
- C. It seems to me that when a person is converted there's always at least three dimensions to it: the Intellectual, the Relational, and the Providential.
1. We tend to think conversion is just Intellectual, we've got to get facts into people, persuade them. That's part of it, but then when they don't immediately buy in, we don't know what to do.
  2. That's when we run up into this Relational dimension. Don't keep forcing the issue, yelling louder, foaming at the mouth until they cry uncle. Love them. Lean into relationship with them. Walk alongside them. Care about them. They're not your project, they're a person. Share the gospel with you words, but then show it to them with your life.
  3. And the Providential piece is just, as you speak truth and as you show love, God may take them through a trial, topple some idols, or connect some dots, work some miracle providentially in their life and circumstances, and it opens them up further to things, and you're there, you've been there, loving them, and they're interested and ready to talk a little more.
- D. This is my salvation story:
1. Guys shared with me. I thought it was a joke.
  2. But they didn't turn away, they just loved me and prayed for me and walked alongside me, even though I was a jerk.
  3. And then God humbled me, broke me. So what did I do? I called these guys up and said: “Will you pray, I want Jesus in my life!”
    - a. Intellectual, Relational, and Providential.
- E. So I'll just leave you with a homework assignment:
1. Think of one person you've hit a dead end with when it comes to sharing the gospel. Here's what I want you to do: Pray and think through one way you can go out of your way to love them this week. Might just be a text. Might be an invitation to dinner, or a gift, or something like this. Just surprise them. Let them know you love them. You've shared the cross with them, now show it to them. And pray that God orders their circumstances in such a way that they're hearts open a little wider.