

# Masterwork of the Messiah

## Expositional Study Of Matthew's Gospel

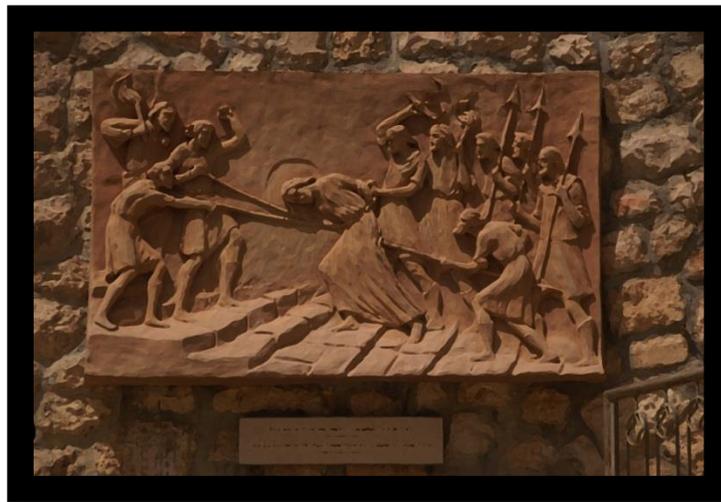
### *The Trumped Up Trial: Part 1*

Matthew 26:57-68

Written By

©Pastor Marty Baker

February 8, 2015



I've read thousands of pages of apologetic literature, but at the top of my list has got to be Greg Koukl's highly logical, practical, and helpful *Tactics*. If you want to equip yourself with how to effectively and lovingly defend the faith in a hostile, intolerant, highly judgmental environment, he will give you the much needed tools. His approach is simple: use the Socratic method, or the art of asking the right questions, in the right way, and at the right time. Good, sound, well-thought-out questions serve a wide array of purposes from showing the person who is attacking your Christian belief the untenable nature of their position. The goal is to cause them to, at least, slow down to consider that they just might be highly wrong in their conclusions. Believe me, this is a book you'll not just read ... you'll study, memorize, and employ its various logical and powerful rhetorical techniques to move those trapped in spiritual darkness to spiritual light.

Greg's approach to apologetics is nothing new. He has merely taken the method of His Master, Jesus, and brought it to our contemporary culture and applied it to our current philosophical, moral, spiritual, and scientific issues. And he speaks as one who is on trial daily for his faith, whether it is debating cocky skeptics on the radio, or fielding barbed, condescending questions on university campuses, Greg is a skilled ambassador of Christ. His writings, which appear in book and article form are located to either read or purchase on his

website [www.str.org](http://www.str.org) (*Stand To Reason*). Go here and study how you, too, can be a fine and fruitful ambassador of your Lord in tough, testy situations.

But don't think the Socratic method is the only method for defending the faith. As stated, Jesus used it at times (Matthew 22:41; Mark 11:29; Luke 20:3), but at other times He employed different methods when the carnal culture sought to extinguish the flame of faith. We see Him employing these various apologetic methods during His trumped up trial, and by analyzing His methods we, too, can learn how to respond when we are, as it were, put on trial for our faith.

## What Are Good Tactics When You're On Trial? (John 18:13-23; Matthew 26:57-68)

Christ's illegal trial instigated first by the Jewish High Court, the Great Sanhedrin, had two major movements, which, in turn, contained three phases respectively. By analyzing *The NIV Harmony of the Gospels* by Robert Thomas and Stanley Gundry, we learn that the Jewish trial movement started with phase one being at the home of Annas, the former High Priest and father-in-law of the current High Priest, Caiaphas. John gives us the historical detail and from this we shall encounter our first apologetic tactic in trying times when faith is accosted, perhaps even by those who think they represent God.

### Do Speak Up! (John 18:13-23)

John, not Matthew (or Mark or Luke), tells us what happened immediately after they arrested Jesus in the middle of the night at Gethsemane:

<sup>13</sup> and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. <sup>14</sup> Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people ...

Why did they take him to the former High Priest first? Although High Priests were to serve for life, according to the Mosaic Law, it is theorized by New Testament scholars that Rome removed Annas because he wielded too much power; however he still retained the coveted title, he controlled the money changers on the Temple Mount, along with all those who sold sacrificial animals. Simply put, no one did any business at the Temple unless ol,' wicked, greedy Annas received a financial cut. He also retained great power and influence over his son-in-law, Caiaphas.

Why, then, did Jesus come to the home of Annas first? Two main reasons.

Annas hated Christ because he had, on two occasions, cut deeply into his profit margin by cleansing the Temple (John 2:15; Matthew 21:12), He had dared to speak against their cleverly crafted religious rules and traditions, He openly won every debate they had with Him, and He had the admiration of the people. It was now payback time. Materialistic greed and the hatred of true holiness drove Annas, the High Priest, to get even with the self-proclaimed Messiah. Obviously, he picked the wrong fight with the wrong person.

Seeking to get Jesus to incriminate Himself at this informal hearing, which was illegal, Annas asked Jesus about His teachings, as if they were bathed in falsity and possibly insurrection.

... <sup>19</sup> The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching.

Knowing Jewish Law and that Annas was fishing for evidence to bring forth a conviction ..

<sup>20</sup> Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret.

Annas was, based on the former conclusion of Caiaphas that Jesus should die because He was gaining too much power and notoriety from the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11:38-52), wickedly working outside the bounds of the law to secure damning evidence from Jesus so He could be summarily executed. Take a lesson from this approach:

- Don't be shocked at the lengths godless people will go to silence Christians, regardless of strong evidence from said Christians which runs counter to their twisted conclusions.
- Don't be shocked when godless people defy Constitutional Law to silence the moral, spiritual voice of Christians.
- Don't be shocked when godless people re-write moral laws to embrace immoral laws so they can, at last, silence the Church by legal means. Since they sought this method with Christ, expect no different as we descend into greater moral, spiritual, and economic darkness.

How should you respond? Consider your Lord.

Jesus, as we see, stood strong and true, and courageously reacquainted the devious priest He had done nothing wrong. He had conducted His whole teaching ministry in the public square. Nothing was done in secret. He had no hidden agenda, and He assembled no clandestine fifth column. But Jesus didn't stop here. He proceeded to be quite pointed.

<sup>21</sup> "Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said."

Christ's response was respectful but challenging. He let the High Priest know it was highly illegal to question Him for the purpose of securing incriminating information. He also challenged him to try and secure legitimate accusers, based on the law, from anyone who had heard Him speak. The implication was clear: The High Priest had hypocritically violated the law. Really, who was on trial? Really, who was in control of the situation? Jesus, the true High Priest.

When Annas lost face with this righteous, lawful response, we read what happened next:

<sup>22</sup> When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, “Is that the way You answer the high priest?”

Interesting. When they can't handle the truth and the facts, when you expose their misuse of the law (or the facts) to validate their Christophobia, they just might move to physical, or at least, verbal, *ad hominen* attacks.<sup>1</sup> Don't be shocked.

How should you respond? Again, study your Lord well:

<sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?”

Once more, Jesus appealed to the Law. No viable evidence had been produced to convict Him of anything, the procedure of the Law had been disregarded by seeking His self-incrimination, no viable witnesses had been produced, He had not been treated as innocent until proven guilty, as the Law mandated; therefore, striking Him defied the very Law these men said they were sworn to uphold. Gusty, courageous move, wouldn't you agree?

What do we learn from this exchange? We learn that we must, of all people, stand up for our rights, especially as they are articulated in our Constitution. We have the right to free speech, and calling our speech hate speech, which it isn't, doesn't abrogate the Constitution. We have the right to call sin, sin. We have the right to speak publically and openly about our beliefs, even if those beliefs run counter to others. We have the right to hold leaders accountable to follow the law, and to confront them when they seek to modify the Law for their own moral, political ideologies. We have the right to hold suspect those who have wrongly separated the Church and the State based on a faulty reading of the Constitution, based on a desire to drive Christianity from our culture. We have the right to steer clear of sin, even when our High Court re-shapes the God-given definition of marriage and the roles of men and women. Jesus didn't flinch at exercising His rights afforded Him by the Mosaic Law, and we shouldn't flinch either when spiritual truth and justice are at stake.

Note carefully how Jesus employed the Socratic method in this first phase of His Jewish trial. Posing questions to those who'd accuse you is not out of line, and in some circumstances is most warranted. So, don't be afraid to speak up, but do anticipate an angry outburst from those who know their approach is weak, untenable, and perhaps even illegal.

Leaving the home of Annas, the torch, sword, and club bearing menacing mob next drug Jesus to the home of the current High Priest, Caiaphas, for phase two of His illegal Jewish trial. What occurs in this home in the middle of the night leads us to a second apologetic concept:

## Do Wise Up (Matthew 27:57-62)

By taking Jesus first to the home of Annas, Caiaphas had time to assemble the Great Sanhedrin at his home for the second phrase of Christ's trumped up trial. Matthew faithfully records what occurred next:

---

<sup>1</sup> “Ad hominem,” Wikipedia. Accessed February 5, 2015, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ad\\_hominem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ad_hominem).

<sup>57</sup> Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. <sup>58</sup> 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. <sup>59</sup> Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death.

The Great Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of Israel, was composed of seventy men who were leading chief priests (Sadducees), teachers/scribes (scholars) of the Law (these men were typically Pharisees), and influential elders (Sadducees) from powerful families outside of the priestly line. Their number came from Moses' appointment of seventy advisors to help him with various legal matters (Numbers 11:16). The majority of this court was composed of Sadducees, with a smattering of Pharisees.

Who were the Sadducees? These wealthy, snooty, powerful, manipulative aristocratic priests held to the love of the Pentateuch so closely they didn't give as much credence to the writings of the prophets, they couldn't stand the oral law and traditions of the Pharisees, they believed in free-will, they denied the doctrine of the resurrection (Matthew 22:23; Acts 4:1-2), and they rejected the belief in angels (Acts 23:8), and were skeptical of heaven. From our perspective, they were the theological liberals of the day. They were skilled in the politics of Judaism at the expense of the love of Judaism. No wonder, then, they opposed Christ. His teachings countered their teachings. His miracles decimated their false and very humanistic worldview. His actions in clearing the Temple threatened their menacing monetary base.

Legally, the Sanhedrin could hear and adjudicate charges, but they couldn't create formal charges against anyone ... nor could they seek to base a legal decision on known perjured testimony. They were under strict Mosaic guidelines to render just, fair judgment as prescribed in Deuteronomy 16:

<sup>18</sup> You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. <sup>19</sup> You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. <sup>20</sup> Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

This is what the Law stated, but this is not what they did with Christ. In fact, in the case of Christ, they so hated Him for what He claimed, what He taught, what He demonstrated by divine power, how He loved people and drew the masses, they would bend, twist, distort, and brazenly defy the Law in order to get their wicked way.

Consider the illegalities of Christ's trial, bearing in mind the irony of all of this. They, who considered themselves holy and righteous, were the evil ones. They, who sought to convict an innocent man to silence Him, were the guilty ones who needed conviction. But they were blinded to their own prideful, deep-seated sin, and all of this moved them to move in the most illegal fashion.

- They purposefully sought and listened to false testimony. They didn't care one iota about the facts.

- They acted as prosecutors when this was not their role in court.
- They judged Christ, as we shall see, on His supposedly self-incriminating words.
- They didn't wait the typical three day (cooling off period) before the execution of the accused, but moved the case along as quickly as possible lest it be derailed.
- Witnesses had to not only share their evidence but had to give the precise month, day, and time of the crime. The witnesses this trumped up court listened to didn't bother with this stipulation.
- They convened the trial at night, which was verboten.

Everything about the trial of Christ was trumped up ... a sinister sham, a truly kangaroo, and banana republic court where truth and law was not absolute but relative to the desire of the moment. Sound familiar?

These supposedly legally minded, God-fearing men had no problem with courtroom illegalities to get rid of Christ, and searching for good false witnesses didn't cause them to flinch one bit. They heard a number of false witnesses, but two stuck out:

<sup>60</sup> They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, <sup>61</sup> and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.' "

In essence, Christ did make a statement similar to this years prior when he started His ministry by clearing/cleansing the Temple. The religious authorities wanted a sign to verify He had the right to do this. He gave them one:

<sup>18</sup> The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?" <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup> The Jews therefore said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup> But He was speaking of the temple of His body (John 2).

The so-called credible witnesses selectively (mis-)quoted Christ, leaving out the fact He could have been speaking about His body as the Temple and not the actual physical Temple. Additionally, even if Christ seemed to speak about physically razing and then raising the Temple, this, in and of itself, was not a criminal statement worthy of death. But the High Court would have none of this because they were not interested in the facts. They only wanted testimony, even if it was tainted, so they could "legally" do what they wanted to Christ in order to permanently silence Him.

We should all stand up and take notice of this type of opposition.

- As Statism grows, they will, by definition, have to silence Christians and the Church because we are the last group standing in their way for total power consolidation. How are they working against the Christ and His Church? Through disinformation, through demonization of our views, through

purposeful misrepresentation of what we teach and stand for, through slapping vile, volatile monikers on us and so forth.

- As scientism grows, its proponents will, by definition, have to cast us in the worst possible light. Our science will not be seen as science. Our appeal to the facts will not be taken as credible facts. Our use of logic and reason will not be seen as consistent and viable, or even academic.
- As the “lofty” moral value called intolerance expands, its followers will, by definition, have to work overtime to root out ... and passionately so ... all absolute moral/spiritual statements articulated by Christians.

And to achieve these various Christ-rejecting purposes, you can expect to see more and more covert and overt misrepresentations of Christ, Christians, and the Bible so it can be sidelined and/or silenced. So, wise up! We live in wicked times (2 Timothy 4:1-5), but we cannot forget that we have the Word of God and the life-giving words of the gospel of our risen Savior.

Jesus dripped with wisdom and that’s why all of these attacks, as brutal and mean-spirited as they were, didn’t get Him to abandon His mission for one second. Let’s follow in His steps by wrapping our minds around the fact there is a spiritual war at hand.

While you tactically prepare to be salt and light to those around you, come to terms with the next crucial concept from Christ’s trumped up trial:

### Do Stand Down (Matthew 26:62-63)

Filled with fury at Christ’s calm, collected demeanor in the face of such “damning” evidence, Caiaphas couldn’t resist loudly exclaiming:

<sup>62</sup> The high priest stood up and said to Him, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?”

The negative “not” (Οὐδὲν ἀποκρίνη τί οὗτοί σου καταμαρτυροῦσιν) is most emphatic in Greek, underscoring his priestly disbelief that Jesus has nothing to say in His defense.

How did Jesus respond to this fiery query? Matthew tells us:

<sup>63</sup> But Jesus kept silent.

Why did He keep silent? A couple of reasons come to mind: One, He had to fulfill His mission to be THE sacrifice for sinners; therefore, refutation of the claim wouldn’t have served this greater purpose (Isaiah 53). Two, Jesus had to fulfill the prophecy from Isaiah 53:7 that He would be as quiet as a little lamb led to slaughter. His silence is also reminiscent of the words of the Psalm in chapter 38:

<sup>12</sup> Those who seek my life lay snares *for me*; and those who seek to injure me have threatened destruction, and they devise treachery all day long. <sup>13</sup> But I, like a deaf man, do not hear; and I am like a dumb man who does not open his mouth. <sup>14</sup> Yes, I am like a man who does not hear, and in whose mouth are no arguments. <sup>15</sup> For I hope in Thee, O LORD; Thou wilt answer, O Lord my God.

Yes, that was Jesus: Quiet and waiting for the vindication of the Father. Three, He lived out the essence of Proverbs 26:4 which says, “<sup>4</sup> Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him.” Four, and most importantly, Jesus knew that His miracles, in and of themselves, provided ample evidence that He could destroy and raise the Temple physically if He so desired. Consider the fact earlier this same week He had healed countless blind and lame people, giving them new eyes and new legs (Matthew 21:14). Isaiah prophesied the Messiah would be able to do this (Isaiah 29:18; 35:5; 42:7), and the fact He did it effortlessly and repeatedly presented the authorities with incontrovertible evidence He was the Messiah. Based on this last fact alone, no answer needed to be given to such unworthy, lying witnesses.

What should we learn from this? Several things.

If you are an unbeliever engaged in endless, prickly debate with Christians, it might just be time to stop haranguing the evidence and start studying the evidence for the person and work of Jesus Christ. Lee Strobel, the former atheist and journalist, stopped arguing and started studying the evidence and wound up bowing before the blood-stained cross of the Savior. His books, like *The Case for Christ* and *The Case for Faith*, merely share the evidence he encountered concerning the authentication of the gospel story.

If you are a believer, realize there are times when you use the question method of apologetics proposed by Koukl, there are times when you present the evidences of the reality of God’s existence, the veracity of His Word as the only Word to mankind, and the historical evidences for the death and resurrection of Christ. Yes, there are times when you answer the plethora of questions posed by a person who engages you regarding the faith; however, this is not an endless endeavor, especially if they are perpetually antagonistic and argumentative. From Christ we learn that sometimes silence is the best apologetic.

Got anyone you have engaged too often? Are you mixing it up with a given person who has debated you for years over epistemology and the Christian faith, only to see your best efforts, arguments, and proofs all on a hard heart? Perhaps it is time for you to be quiet and to let the facts speak for themselves.

One final tactic needs to be presented from our Lord rigged trial:

### Do Stand Up (Matthew 26:64-68)

We can only surmise the silence of Jesus made quite a negative impression on Caiaphas. Realizing he was not getting the confession he desired, he pulled the divine oath card on Jesus:

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.”

You couldn’t have found a more pompous, prideful High Priest. He looked the living God, the One who is the essence of all truth (John 14:1-6) eye to eye and dared to challenge Him to take an oath to tell the truth. Jaw dropping, isn’t it?

This time, Jesus responded.

<sup>64</sup> Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself; ...

By using the personal pronoun first in His response, Jesus made His reply most emphatic: Σὺ εἶπας, which is tantamount to saying, “You said it.” Mark’s account is more explicit since he

recounts, from what Peter told him, Christ using the great divine name, “I am,” or *Εγώ εἰμι*. If you’ve ever wondered if Christ ever claimed He was the divine Messiah and the Son of God, let this statement from His lips remove all doubt. And, in all reality, He had spoken about His identity countless times:

- When He started His ministry in Nazareth, He identified Himself to His hometown folks as the Messiah (Luke 4:18-21).
- He told the Samaritan woman at the well at the beginning of His ministry that He was, in fact, the Messiah (John 4:25-26).
- He repeatedly told the religious authorities that He was the Son of the Heavenly Father (John 5:17-18).
- He went so far in John 8:58 to inform them that He was the I AM of history, the God beyond all time and space.
- The Heavenly Father verified His sonship by speaking from heaven at His baptism (Matthew 3:17).
- His countless physical healings, control over the natural order, and authority over demonic spirits clearly underscored He fulfilled the prophesied role as the Messiah.
- Even His lineage tied back to David and the tribe of Judah, buttressed the truth of His divine and messianic identity as foretold by Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6).

These indisputable proofs and evidences definitively illustrated to anyone with the ability to consider them that He was THE Christ and THE Son of God. Obviously, Caiaphas’ hard heart kept him from being bothered by or even considering for one second the factual evidences. To do so would be to lose everything he held dear: power, prestige, and wealth ... all the things the Devil had tempted Christ with in the wilderness (Matthew 4).

Again, what do we learn from this exchange? We learn that you must be studied and ready to validate the divinity and messiahship of Jesus to a godless world. Why? Because His divinity and messiahship changes everything. How can you prepare yourself? Why not start by reading a great book like *Jesus Among Other Gods* by Ravi Zacharias. Our world desperately needs to definitively hear, perhaps one more time, the proofs to His identity as the true and only Savior so they can have the hope of salvation. Or as in the case of Caiaphas, the re-articulation served as a judgment on his spiritually hard-hearted life in lieu of the cold, hard, incontestable facts.

Jesus, in control of this whole trumped up trial, closed out this phase with a word of absolute warning to the sinful High Priest:

... 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.”

By combining Psalm 110:1, concerning the Father making the Messiah’s enemies His footstool, and Daniel 7:13, which speaks of the Messiah coming in power and judgmental glory to establish His Davidic empire, Jesus gave Caiaphas this eschatological warning. Paraphrased Jesus said, “Caiaphas, you will live to see the day when come in clouds filled with my Shekinah glory to be your divine Judge.” Once again, I ask, “Who was in control of the trial?” Jesus. Ironically, his

physical executioners would one day face His eternal execution. His trumped up trial would one day find its members in a true, viable, legal trial they wouldn't win. Think about it. For two thousand years all of these devious people have not only had haunting questions bombarding their minds about their actions, but they await the moment when they stand before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus, the Christ. Ominous, isn't it?

How did Caiaphas respond to this word of divine judgment? He didn't miss a beat in his quest to appear holy and just:

<sup>65</sup> 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; <sup>66</sup> what do you think?" They answered, "He deserves death!" <sup>67</sup> Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, <sup>68</sup> and said, "Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?"

Christ could only have been guilty of blasphemy if He wasn't God. All the facts showed He was God and the promised Messiah. Hence, He was innocent, and an innocent, pure Lamb was what the Father required to bear all of our sins on that cruel, wooden tree.

Tactically, we can't help but see that there does come the time when you need to speak words of judgment to unrepentant, untrusting sinners. It is not culturally acceptable to speak in such a fashion, but when eternity is at stake, we cannot mince words. Jesus didn't ... even when His life was on the line. We can do no less.