

love for sinners shine out from this. "God so loved the world." How great was Christ's love for us when He endured the agony of Gethsemane and Calvary! How terrible the thought of sinners refusing to come to that blessed Saviour who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, and hath reconciled us to God by that great sacrifice. Let us strive to impress it deeper and deeper on the hearts of old and young that Christ suffered all this for us, and if we realise our position as sinners needing a Saviour and accept of Christ as freely and fully offered to us in the Gospel our sins will be forgiven for His sake and God will accept us as righteous.

FIFTH SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*Jesus before the High Priest*
—Matt. 26 : 59–68.

"They led Him to Caiaphas the High Priest." John says they first led Jesus to Annas. There is no contradiction in this. They led Him to Annas first because he was father-in-law of Caiaphas and his colleague in the Priesthood. This was done out of respect to Annas. But as the Jewish Sanhedrim or Supreme Court, was sitting at the palace of Caiaphas they led Jesus there to undergo His mock trial. We say mock trial! for never was there a greater prostitution of justice. They have made up their mind that He is guilty, and now they are determined to find the means of condemning Him. To do this they employ false witnesses. This corrupt court encouraged such witnesses to assist them in the execution of their vile proceedings.

"Many false witnesses were called." They naturally contradicted each other as false men are always sure to do. According to the Jewish law a man could not be put to death, or condemned unless two consistent witnesses were found. This explains what followed. "At last came two false witnesses." See the hand of God in this. Christ must not be condemned on a false accusation, but on the evidence of His own innocence, purity and truth. They accuse our Lord of having said that He would destroy the temple of God, and build it in three days. But we know Jesus never said such words. Their object was to rouse the Jews against Him and no better way could have been adopted than to make out that He had a design against their temple. John 2, 19 shows what our Lord did say. By this temple He meant His own body. How easy by slight alterations to distort the most sacred truth and even destroy the life of the purest and holiest of beings.

"Jesus held His peace." What a majesty in this silence of Jesus. He is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb so He opened not His mouth. Here is a lesson to His followers

teaching the best way to meet those who falsely accuse us. This was Christ's direction to His disciples. But there is a time to speak as well as to be silent. "*I adjure thee by the living God.*" I put thee on thy oath. The circumstances are changed. He is asked to testify to His Messiahship, and he does so. "*Thou hast said*" i. e. I am the Christ, the promised Messiah, and ye shall soon see by the spread of my kingdom and my final victory full proof of this. Our Saviour may refer to Dan. 7, 13, "One like the son of man came with the clouds of Heaven." It may refer to the final judgment, "The High Priest rent his clothes" By doing this he violated the law he professed to obey. See Lev. 10 : 6, and 21 : 10. Rending of the garments was a common method of expressing grief and horror, see Gen. 37, 39, where Reuben rent his clothes when he found Joseph gone from the pit. Also John 1, 20, Acts 14, 14. Every form of justice is here violated. The judge is a party and accuser, and without proper evidence or inquiry proceeds to pass judgment. This is the signal for abuse and violence. "*Then did they spit in His face.*" A mark of the most profound contempt. See Job 16, 10, also 30, 10, Isaiah 1, 6. Our Lord was now given over to the mob that clamoured for His blood. "*They buffeted Him,*" that is they smote Him with their fists; "*while some smote Him with the palms of their hands.*" Then we see how no form of indignity was spared our blessed Lord. But we must not fail to notice how meek and gentle he remained under all this. How would we endure such insults? We know what the men of the world would do! how they would resent it by violence. But the disciples of Jesus must copy their Master in this as in other things. Mark especially how wonderfully Isaiah foretold all this more than 700 years before Christ came. See chapter 50, 6, "I gave my back to the smiter and my cheek to them that plucked off the hair, I hid not my face from shame and spitting." And all this was predicted by one whose prophetic writings were well known and greatly prized by the Jews who prosecuted Jesus. "Prophecy unto us, who is he that smote thee." We learn from Mark 14–65 that they bound up His eyes before they buffeted Him.

We may learn from these verses how literally the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah and thus were fulfilled in all that they foretold regarding our Saviour's life, sufferings and death. How complete is the whole word of God. How many and bitter the sufferings our blessed Lord endured before He reached the last terrible struggle. Verily He was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Let us remember that He was wounded for our iniquity.