

Matthew 26:59

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

Analysis

Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death (οἱ δὲ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι καὶ τὸ συνέδριον ὅλον ἐζήτουν ψευδομαρτυρίαν κατὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ὅπως αὐτὸν θανατώσωσιν)—The imperfect ἐζήτουν ('were seeking') shows sustained effort. They sought ψευδομαρτυρία (false testimony, perjured witness) κατὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ('against Jesus'). The purpose clause ὅπως αὐτὸν θανατώσωσιν ('so that they might put Him to death') reveals predetermined verdict—this wasn't trial seeking truth but inquisition manufacturing justification for predetermined execution. The phrase τὸ συνέδριον ὅλον ('the whole council,' entire Sanhedrin) indicates institutional guilt, not merely individuals.

Seeking false testimony violated the ninth commandment ('You shall not bear false witness,' Exodus 20:16) and perverted justice ('You shall not follow a crowd to do evil,' Exodus 23:2). Religious leaders charged with upholding God's law brazenly violated it. Their action fulfilled Psalm 35:11—'False witnesses rise up; they ask me of things that I do not know.' The supreme irony: guardians of Torah trampling Torah to kill Torah incarnate (John 1:1, 14). When religion serves power rather than truth, it becomes demonic.

Historical Context

The Sanhedrin was Judaism's supreme court—71 members (high priest, chief priests, elders, scribes). It handled religious/civil matters under Roman oversight

(Rome reserved death-penalty authority). Jewish law required two or three witnesses agreeing in details (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). The seeking of false witnesses shows they couldn't find legitimate charges—Jesus's ministry was blameless. This illegal proceeding fulfilled Isaiah 53:7-8: 'He was oppressed and afflicted...by oppression and judgment He was taken away.' Injustice against the Just One demonstrated humanity's depravity and God's redemptive grace.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do religious leaders sometimes prioritize institutional preservation over truth and justice?
2. What does the Sanhedrin's seeking false testimony teach about the corrupting influence of predetermined agendas on judicial processes?

Interlinear Text

οἱ	δὲ	ἀρχιερεῖς	καὶ	οἱ	πρεσβύτεροι	καὶ	τὸ
G3588	Now	the chief priests	and	G3588	elders	and	G3588
G1161		G749		G2532		G2532	

συνέδριον	ὅλον	έζήτουν	ψευδομαρτυρίαν	κατὰ	τοῦ
the council	all	sought	false witness	against	G3588
G4892	G3650	G2212	G5577	G2596	

Ἰησοῦ ὅπως αὐτὸν θανατώσωσιν

Jesus	to	him	put
G2424	G3704	G846	G2289

