

Matthew 26:63

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

Analysis

But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God (ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἐσιώπα. καὶ ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ἐξορκίζω σε κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος ἵνα ἡμῖν εἴπῃς εἰ σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ)—The imperfect ἐσιώπα ('He kept silent, He remained quiet') shows continued silence. The verb ἐξορκίζω (exorkizō, 'to adjure, to put under oath, to charge solemnly') invokes κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος ('by the living God'), making this oath-demand legally binding. Refusing to answer would constitute contempt; answering affirmatively would be 'blasphemy.'

The question is twofold: εἰ σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστός ('if you are the Christ/Messiah') and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ('the Son of God'). In Jewish understanding, 'Christ' (Χριστός, anointed one) primarily meant Davidic king. 'Son of God' could mean messianic king (Psalm 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14) but Jesus's usage implied unique divine sonship. Caiaphas's question cleverly forced Jesus either to deny His identity or confess it—knowing confession would be deemed blasphemy. Jesus was trapped between denial (apostasy) and affirmation ('blasphemy')—He chose truth.

Historical Context

Placing someone under oath 'by the living God' was highest form of adjuration (Leviticus 5:1; 1 Kings 22:16). Refusing to answer violated oath obligations. Jesus's

submission to this oath shows He honored legitimate authority even while unjustly tried. 'The living God' (ὁ θεὸς ὁ ζῶν) distinguished Yahweh from dead idols—ironic, since they invoked the living God to kill Life incarnate. The question's phrasing shows Caiaphas suspected Jesus claimed deity; he forced confession to secure conviction. Jesus's answer (v. 64) confirmed His identity, sealing His death sentence.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's willing confession of truth despite knowing it would cost His life model integrity over self-preservation?
2. When have you faced the choice between denying truth for safety or confessing truth despite persecution?

Interlinear Text

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἐσιώπα καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς
G3588 But Jesus held his peace And answered G3588 the high priest
G1161 G2424 G4623 G2532 G611 G749

εἶπης αὐτῷ Ἐξορκίζω σε κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος
and said unto him I adjure thee by G3588 God G3588 the living
G2036 G846 G1844 G4571 G2596 G2316 G2198

ἵνα ἡμῖν εἶπης εἰ σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς
that us and said whether thou be G3588 the Christ G3588 the Son
G2443 G2254 G2036 G1487 G4771 G1488 G5547 G5207

τοῦ θεοῦ
G3588 God
G2316

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 5:1 (Parallel theme): And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity.

Isaiah 53:7 (Parallel theme): He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Matthew 16:16 (References Christ): And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Matthew 27:12 (Parallel theme): And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

1 Samuel 14:26 (Parallel theme): And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath.