

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 (ο δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἐσιώπα. καὶ ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ἐξορκίζω σε κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος ἵνα ἡμῖν εἴπῃς εἰ σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ νιὸς 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 νιὸς 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

ο	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
εἴπης	αὐτῷ	Ἐξορκίζω	σε	κατὰ	τοῦ	θεοῦ	τοῦ
and said	unto him	I adjure	thee	by	G3588	God	G3588
G2036	G846	G1844	G4571	G2596	G2316	G2198	the living
ἴνα	ἡμῖν	εἴπης	εἰ	σὺ	εἰ	ὁ	υἱὸς
that	us	and said	whether	thou	be	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.

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