

Matthew 26:65

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

Analysis

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy (τότε ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς διέρρηξεν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ λέγων, Ἐβλασφήμησεν)—The verb διαρρήγνυμι (diarrhēgnymi, 'to tear apart, to rend') describes the high priest tearing his ἱμάτια (garments)—traditional expression of horror at blasphemy (2 Kings 18:37; 19:1; Acts 14:14). Ironically, the high priest's garments weren't to be torn (Leviticus 21:10), but he prioritized theatrical outrage over law. The accusation Ἐβλασφήμησεν ('He has blasphemed') meant Jesus spoke against God's honor—punishable by death (Leviticus 24:16).

What further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy (τί ἔτι χρείαν ἔχομεν μαρτύρων; ἵδε νῦν ἡκούσατε τὴν βλασφημίαν)—The rhetorical question declares the trial's end: τί ἔτι χρείαν ἔχομεν μαρτύρων; ('What further need of witnesses do we have?'). Jesus's own testimony sufficed for conviction. The ἵδε ('behold, look') and νῦν ('now') emphasize immediacy—they heard the βλασφημία (blasphemy) personally. But was it blasphemy? Only if Jesus wasn't who He claimed. If He is God's Son, His claim was truth, not blasphemy. Their verdict revealed unbelief, not injustice's correction.

Historical Context

Jewish law defined blasphemy as cursing God using the divine Name (Leviticus 24:11-16). Jesus didn't curse God or pronounce the Tetragrammaton (YHWH), but

He claimed divine sonship and authority—which Caiaphas deemed blasphemy. The high priest's garment-rending was dramatic gesture signaling horror, securing Sanhedrin agreement. Rabbis later taught high priests shouldn't rend garments, but perhaps this applied only to official vestments, not personal clothing. Regardless, Caiaphas's theatrics achieved desired effect—unanimous condemnation (v. 66).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Caiaphas calling truth 'blasphemy' warn against religious authorities who label biblical teaching heretical because it challenges their power?
2. When have you seen those who claim to defend God actually opposing Him by rejecting His revealed truth?

Interlinear Text

τότε ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς διέρρηξεν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ, λέγων
Then G3588 **the high priest** rent G3588 **clothes** his **saying**
G5119 G749 G1284 G2440 G846 G3004

ὅτι Ἐβλασφήμησεν· τί ἔτι χρείαν ἔχομεν
G3754 **He hath spoken blasphemy** **what** **further** **need** **have we**
G987 G5101 G2089 G5532 G2192

μαρτύρων ἵδε νῦν ἡκούσατε τὴν βλασφημίαν αὐτοῦ,
of witnesses G1492 **now** **ye have heard** G3588 **blasphemy** his
G3144 G3568 G191 G988 G846

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 36:24 (Parallel theme): Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.

Matthew 9:3 (Parallel theme): And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

John 10:33 (Parallel theme): The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

John 10:36 (Parallel theme): Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

Numbers 14:6 (Parallel theme): And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: