

And the high priest said to [Jesus], **"I adjure You by the living God, tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God."** Jesus said to him, **"You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."** Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard His blasphemy. What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death." Then they spit in His face and struck Him. And some slapped him, saying, **"Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"**

In Christ Jesus, whom we have all struck repeatedly in our sin, dear fellow redeemed:

The prearranged false witnesses did not work. Jesus had some friends on the Jewish high court who asked more than the prearranged questions and the witnesses answers did not agree, showing them to be the frauds they were. In frustration the high priest cuts to the chase: "I adjure You by the living God, tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God." The supposed due process of questioning could not produce the expected fake conviction.

In essence the question comes before Jesus, *"Are You the Christ, the Son of God, sent by the Father?"* The answer was the same as before when Jesus openly and publicly identified Himself as the Christ, the Son of God. But this was the moment when the chief priest had enough unfriendly judges assembled to hear for themselves this bold claim of being God. So, in a feigned fit of rage, tearing his robes, the chief priest puts the question before the all too eager judges: "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?"

The answer was clear in their minds: "He deserves death." Now, of course, Jesus was not guilty of blasphemy, He did not falsely make Himself God, He has been and always will be God. But in their minds Jesus appeared to them in all lowliness, so that He might journey all the way to the cross of your salvation.

But again, according to the heavenly Father, His Son, because He was His holy Son come in the flesh, must now die. On the one hand Jesus did not deserve to die, but His Father desired Him to die in your place and mine; in the place of all sinners. But the Heavenly Father did not tear His robes, if you will. He willingly gave the command:

*Then go, bright Jewel of My crown.  
And bring to man salvation.  
From sin and sorrow set him free;  
Slay bitter death for him, that he  
May live with Thee forever.*

(ELH #378, v. 5)

The bully questions of mockery were poured out mercilessly upon our Lord. After spitting upon Jesus and slapping Him, they cruelly asked: "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?" This was unbelief's response to Jesus' answer. Could Jesus have named them with their full and proper names? Of course, He could. He knew them, He was bearing their sins and receiving their just desserts. He knew them intimately, just as He knows your names my fellow sinners.

As your Good Shepherd we read this about Him: "The sheep hear His voice, and He calls His own sheep by name and leads them." And we read about the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, that is, heaven, there will be "only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." Jesus commenting on the individual believers at the church of Sardis we read: "I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels."

So, did Jesus know all those who struck Him? Yes, the names of all sinners, you and me included, who with our many sins have figuratively slapped our Lord in the face with every grievous thought, word or deed. But there is this difference – those who literally slapped our Lord in the face in His trial before the chief priest were arrogant unbelievers. You and I do believe that Jesus is the Son of God and fully expect that we will see Him come again as also the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

When Jesus comes again, He will come to judge the living and the dead. When He gathers us to His right, He will know us each by name and will address us together as His precious Righteous Ones. All our sins, every slap in Jesus' face with our sins, even as believers, are forgiven and we are dressed in His holiness as we get to hear the invite to heaven: "Come, you who are blessed by the Father, receive the inheritance prepared for you."

The blessed answer of Jesus that He is the Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, addresses all our needs. We need a holy God-Man Substitute as sinners, in order to be saved from our sin, death and hell. Jesus came to take your place and not just yours, but the place of all sinners, even the cloak ripping high priest, all those who declared Jesus deserving death for His blasphemy and even those who spit upon and slapped Jesus in mockery.

When you happily recite that familiar passage "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" you can and should insert our own name alongside the word "world". If God loved the entire human race found in the world, you can and should be certain He loves you. Every time Jesus places the price paid for you in your mouth – His true body and blood; you are not lost in the crowd, but singled out and personally receive this life-giving gift with forgiveness and salvation.

Yes, my fellow sinners, Jesus knows you personally by name. Yes, He is fully aware of each and every sin you have committed charged to Him. *But the Father made His Son to be your sin, so that in Him you might become the righteousness of God.* With Jesus named the sinner of all your sins and the sins of the whole world of sinners, they all died with Him and are removed from you as far as the east is from the west. He now knows you as His Holy One made so by His blood and righteousness. Jesus is the Son of God and knows all those who have sinfully slapped Him, but He also now knows you through faith in Him as His Holy One, who in praise, not mockery, draws near to Him to receive grace upon grace. Amen.