**Oedipus suggests that death may be a suitable punishment. Creon asks: “…what if you are mistaken?” The answer he receives – “Kings must rule” – is very telling. *Oedipus believes that the power of a King should be above reproach – that they should not be second guessed, and ultimately should not answer to anyone.***

**Jocasta attempts to calm Oedipus by claiming that soothsayers are often mistaken. Her words do not have the desired effect. She explains how The Oracle had predicted that Laius – former King and husband – was supposed to die at the hands of his son. This, she believed, did not come true. The child was left to die in the mountains (or so she believes), and her husband (she was told) was killed by robbers. *Dramatic Irony: The audience is aware that Jocasta is mistaken, and that the Oracle’s words were true.***

**Oedipus now believes he may have killed Laius, describing an incident he had some years ago in the area where Laius was said to have been killed. He immediately summons for the lone survivor of the attack on Oedipus.**

**The plot moves along swiftly: Oedipus recognizes that he may indeed be responsible for the plague and pestilence sweeping the city, and that he would have to leave if that is true. “On me is the curse that none but I have laid” (48).**

***Important: He does not yet realize that Jocasta may be his mother! He is upset because he may be the person responsible for killing the king, but also that he married the man’s wife. Questions surrounding his birth are not yet dealt with.***

**Messenger: He arrives from Corinth. King Polybus has died, and the people want Oedipus to take his place. Both Jocasta and Oedipus are temporarily relieved. *Remember: Oedipus believes Polybus was his biological father; the fact that he died, and not at the hand of Oedipus, seems to prove the prophecy false.***

**Oedipus is still concerned, however. The woman he believes to be his mother – Merope – is still alive. “…while she lives, I am not safe” (52). The messenger shocks him by confirming that Oedipus is not their biological son. He knows this because he was the shepherd that gave the baby Oedipus to them.**

**The original Theban shepherd is summoned (he is the same man who survived Oedipus’ confrontation with his Laius). Oedipus claims he must know the truth, despite pleas from Jocasta – who already seems to know the truth, but cannot bear it.**

**The shepherd arrives, and confirms the story. He had been told to dispose of the cursed child, but did not have the heart to follow through*.* Instead, he gave it to another shepherd – the Messenger that now stands before King Oedipus.**

**Jocasta commits suicide (60), and Oedipus blinds himself. Though he is severely wounded, “…he will fly the country / To rid his house of the curse of his own lips” (61). He believes it would have been better if he was left as an infant to die on the mountain.**

***So why didn’t he kill himself, like Jocasta did?* He believed that would be too easy. After what he has done, he believes he deserves to suffer.**