

Series: **Gospel of Mark**

Today's Title: ***"Jesus: Denied and Tried"***

March 28, 2021 – *Mark 14:53-15:15* (Also: Matthew 26:57-27:14; Luke 22:54-23:16; John 18:12-40)

Objective: To help people that Jesus endured outrageous injustice for our salvation.

Turn to Mark 14:53 - 15:15

Part of Easter is about injustice.

The greatest injustice the world has ever known was perpetrated against Jesus.

This morning I want to look at the trials of Jesus - which were sham / illegal trials.

We'll also look at Peter's triple denial of Jesus.

All these things Jesus endured for our benefit...our salvation.

Read 14:53-65

The Jewish Trials *14:53-65*

Deuteronomy 16:18-20 set the high standard for the justice system in Israel.

Deuteronomy 16:18-20

"You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.

You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you."

The synagogues throughout the nation functioned as the courthouses. A few of the protections God put in place:

- Trials had to be public and had to include a prosecution and a defense.
- Accusations had to be backed up by 2 or 3 witnesses.
- False witnesses faced severe punishment (Deuteronomy 19:16)
- A death penalty conviction required a 24-hour waiting period before the execution could take place.
- No trials at night - or extending into the night.
- No trials on the Sabbath - or on the day before Feast days - such as Passover.

There were 3 Jewish trials / legal proceedings that Jesus underwent - and 1 Roman trial.

The trials for Jesus broke virtually all of these rules, and all 3 of the Jewish trials were illegal.

Trial #1 *John 18:12-14, 19-24*

The first trial was at the house of Annas.

Annas was a former high priest. A high priest kept their title, even after they left the office - just like our country and how a President keeps the title 'President', even after they leave office.

Caiaphas was the acting high priest that year (John 18:13).

Annas was Caiaphas' father-in-law.

Even though Annas wasn't the acting high priest, he was still in charge - leading from behind the scenes.

They have arrested Jesus - they are determined to kill Him - but they have to come up with charges - an indictment which will justify killing Jesus.

This is what Annas is trying to achieve.

While Jesus is being questioned by Annas, the Sanhedrin is gathering at Caiaphas' house.

It's likely that Annas and Caiaphas lived in the same complex - with multiple homes and a shared courtyard.

This first trial / legal proceeding with Annas is illegal:

- It's in the middle of the night
- In secret
- No duly appointed judge
- No prosecution - no defense
- No official court
- No witnesses
- No testimony
- Jesus has been arrested without any crime being committed or charged.

Annas is trying to come up with a crime - something he can use to create an indictment against Jesus.

“The high priest (*Annas*) then questioned Jesus about His disciples and His teaching.” - John 18:19

Annas is fishing.

They have their verdict and punishment - if only they had a crime!!

But Jesus knows the law. He knows this is illegal - and He doesn't answer Annas.

He tells Annas to ask those who heard Him teach - ask them what He taught!!!

Annas fails to come up with an indictment - fails to come up with a crime to charge Jesus with - so he sends Jesus to his son-in-law - Caiaphas.

Trial #2 14:53-65

There are multiple scenes taking place this night.

vs. 54 - While Jesus is being questioned by Annas, Peter has followed from a distance (see also Luke 22:54), and he has made his way into the courtyard of Annas & Caiaphas' home. He wants to see what's going on - and he's keeping warm by a fire with some officers and servants (John 18:18).

Back to the trials...

Annas sends Jesus to Caiaphas - the acting high priest. All the gospel writers record false witnesses were used (Mark 14:57) to try and get a crime / charge established, but their testimony didn't agree.

There wasn't enough time to get the lies to match. Even in a corrupt trial, the lies were so blatant they couldn't be used as evidence.

Trial #3 14:53-65

It's difficult to tell because Mark combines all these trials into 1 summary / account, but at some point, the entire Sanhedrin - the entire council - would have gathered at first light - right after dawn - so they could later say they held a legal trial during the day.

Luke 22:66

“When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led Him away to their council...”

As daylight rises over Jerusalem, the religious establishment makes quick work of this sham trial.

They have failed to come up with any crime or indictment even close to deserving death, and they finally ask a question that is not an accusation, but a question of identity.

vs. 61 - “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”

Matthew 26:63 “I adjure You by the living God...”

Jesus answers their question.

He kept silent and refused to answer all their other questions and accusations - because they were lies - and He was not required to answer under Jewish law.

No defendant could be forced to self-incriminate - and Jesus wasn't going to respond to the accusations of false witnesses.

But this is a question of identity.

They ask Jesus this question and used a very strong oath in their question (Matt. 26:63), which is why Jesus gives His answer.

Even though Jesus knew what the response would be to His answer, He freely shares His identity - as He had done many times before in public.

vs. 62 - And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

This is Messianic terminology.

This is also an affirmation of His deity.

His answer is rooted in **Psalm 110:1** and **Daniel 7:13-14** - both passages that speak of the deity of the Messiah.

Psalm 110:1

The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

Daniel 7:13-14

“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and He came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”

The reaction of the high priest is predictable - symbolic - and part of the guilty verdict.

This is not done as a display of rage or emotion so much as it is a verdict.

vs. 63-64 - And the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further witnesses do we need? You have heard His blasphemy.

What is your decision?” And they all condemned Him as deserving death.”

They considered this blasphemy.

Blasphemy: *the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God...the act of claiming the attributes of a deity.*

But it's not blasphemy if you are God.

It's only blasphemy if you claim to be God...but aren't God.

Leviticus 24:16

“Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death.”

They now have their verdict - and feel justified to add a little prisoner abuse before the next step.

Jewish capital punishment was done by stoning, but under Roman occupation the Jews were not permitted to follow through with a death penalty conviction.

Now, the next step for the religious establishment will be to get the Roman governor - Pilate - to execute Jesus.

But first, the scene moves back to the courtyard, and Peter.

Peter's triple denial of Jesus 14:66-72 (Also: Matt. 26:69-75; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27)

Read vs. 66-72

A servant girl recognizes Peter...she gazes intently at him - and says, “You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.”

He denies her assertion - **denial #1.**

He changes his location - probably to get away from the questioning.

Peter has lived a series of highs and lows.

Great assertions and acts of faith - followed by giant flubs and failures of faith.

- Walks on water - then panics and loses faith - sinks.
- “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” - “Get behind Me Satan.”
- **John 13** - “Don’t wash my feet” - “Wash my entire body!”
- “Even though they all fall away, I will not.” - “this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.”

Mark mentions the first rooster crow.

You would think this would be a haunting reminder for Peter of the dangerous place he is in.

But Peter was always confident. He could handle it. He’s strong - He’s committed - Nobody can threaten him!

Instead of leaving - running - he stays - and eventually, probably to stay warm, moves back to where the fire is - and the others.

vs. 69 - this time the servant girl is talking to the “bystanders” - and telling them “this man is one of them”.

He denies this - **denial #2**.

Later (vs. 70), due to his accent (Matt. 26:73), the “bystanders” connect Peter to Jesus.

For **the 3rd time**, Peter denies any connection to Jesus.

The 2nd crow of the rooster.

Luke 22:61

“And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.”

3 denials - just as Jesus said.

Peter broke down. The other gospel writers tell us he left the courtyard and wept bitterly.

This breaks Peter.

- His self-confidence is revealed to be a house of cards.
- A house built on sand.

Truth is, he needed to be broken.

His arrogance and pride were hazardous to himself - and to others.

Humility is the key to greatness in Jesus' kingdom.

Peter will grow in humility - and the evidence of that growth is not only in what we read in **John 21:15-19** as Jesus reinstates Peter as the leader, but what we will see in **Acts** as Peter leads the other disciples and leads the Church.

We see it in the tradition that Peter is the eyewitness source for Mark's Gospel - and Peter's self-revelation throughout of his failures is significant.

We also see it in what Peter writes later in his letters to the churches in Asian Minor.

1 Peter 5:5-6

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you..."

Lesson learned!

The Roman Trial 15:1-15

Read 15:1-15

In our final scene, the "chief priests" along with the council take Jesus to Pilate.

Pilate wouldn't care about a charge of blasphemy - he doesn't care about the Jews and their religious beliefs.

So, the "chief priests" bring up another charge - one that will get Pilate's attention.

Luke 23:2

And they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this Man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a king.”

The last part of their charge is true. Jesus claimed many times to be the Christ - which was a claim to the royal, eternal throne of David.

But we know from **Mark 12:17** that their claim regarding tribute to Caesar is a bold-faced lie.

Mark 12:17

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.”

Jesus was not usurping Rome - Caesar - or Pilate.

To the contrary. Jesus had prophesied destruction for the Jerusalem temple - not for Rome!!

Well, Pilate interrogates Jesus - only to be “amazed”. (vs. 5)

Mark is giving us the SparkNotes version.

John gives us some details of the conversation between Jesus and Pilate.

Luke gives us the detail that Pilate sends Jesus to Herod, and when Jesus refused to answer Herod's questions, Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate (23:6-12).

Matthew gives us the details about Judas - that after Jesus was condemned, Judas throws the 30 pieces of silver into the temple and then hanged himself (Matt. 27:3-10).

Back to **Mark**...

In an attempt to get Jesus released, as was customary during Passover, Pilate offers to release 1 prisoner: Jesus or Barabbas - vs. 7 - “who had committed murder”.

Pilate believed Jesus was innocent - but the Jewish religious leaders and the crowd / mob was putting tremendous pressure on Pilate to submit to their wishes. Compared to Barabbas, Jesus was clearly the *‘better person’* and deserving of release.

The pressure reaches its apex in vs. 13-14 - and Pilate relents.

He washes his hands of dirt that can never be removed, and he has Jesus scourged and delivered to the executioners to be crucified.

Apply it...

Peter thought he could do it on his own.

He thought he was strong enough - his over-confidence and pride led him to a very dark place.

Jesus knows about injustice.

He understands when you are mistreated.

Deserted by your friends.

Accused of things you didn't do.

But Jesus chose to suffer these things.

He endured them...willingly...for you...for me.

Hebrews 2:17-18

“so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.”

He did all of it for you.

He endured all of it for you.

Put your faith in Jesus Christ.

He loves you...He wants to save you from your sins.

Close in prayer