

- **James Denney**, “From the start Christ sees two paths that lie before Him, and He chooses at the outset, in spiritual conflict, that which He knows will set Him in irreconcilable antagonism to the hopes and expectations of those to whom He is to appeal”
 - **1:13** – Before His ministry began, Jesus entered the desert for an intense time of testing from Satan ... At the end of 40-days, Jesus emerges victoriously – He has rejected the offers of His enemy; He was zeroed in on completing the mission He was sent to accomplish ... Thus, He begins ministry in conflict – Himself against the schemes of Satan ... How often had the enemy tried to thwart the plans of God, and here he was doing so again unsuccessfully
 - **1:15** – As a result, He sets out to proclaim and demonstrate that the Kingdom of God had come near, and what this means for Jews and Gentiles ... Breaking from tradition, He calls ordinary men to be His disciples ... By His hands miracles happen; by His words people are healed and demons are casted out; by His own authority sins are forgiven ... Jesus disrupts the norm, overthrows the work of Satan, challenges the wrong beliefs and practices of the religious leaders ... He does not challenge them because they are His enemies, but in the desire that their eyes and ears would be opened to receive His call: **“Repent and believe the good news!”** ... After all Jesus was sent to the Jewish people, for He is their Messiah ... His reception, however, was not well received and only grew worse as time unfolded: Mark 3:6; 14:1, 10-11 (Jo1:11)
- As we said last week, Jesus, God the Son, understood the rejection and animosity He was going to endure; none of this surprised Him: Mark 8:31 – **it was necessary**, so He could **give His life as a ransom for many (Is53:11-12)** ... Jesus would endure the cross in order to lay down His life for those who were openly rebellious against Him
 - Before daybreak on Friday, Jesus faced religious trials: 1) Annas – former high priest, held great influence over people (Jo18:12-23), 2) Caiaphas – current high priest, son-in-law of Annas ... At the home of Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin convened (70-member court, Sadducees and Pharisees) to finally confront Jesus ... The Sanhedrin had a sentence for Jesus – they wanted to kill Him; they had a verdict – Jesus was guilty; what they didn’t have was a charge against Jesus, thus their hasty attempt to gather witnesses
 - Jewish law said that to convict someone of a crime, there must be at least 2 witnesses ... The Sanhedrin had people come forward, but none of the testimonies would agree (55-56) ... Let’s stop here for a moment – can you imagine putting God on trial? ... These men wanted Jesus dead, and they did not care how it happened or what they had to trade to get it done ... It definitely reveals a depth of our rebellion and sin ... Mankind has been trying to rid their lives of the True God ever since the fall ... Gen3:5, Satan’s lie to Adam and Eve, **if you eat of the fruit, your eyes will be open and you’ll become like God knowing good and evil** ... The lie being that we’ll be able to rightly know good from evil, and that we could become like God ... Ever since, mankind has been defining for itself what good is and what evil is, and we have been living as if we are God – the true god in life (Col1:21)
 - Of course mankind would conceive of the idea of putting Jesus on trial ... Though He was the Messiah that they needed, He was not the Messiah that they wanted ... They didn’t like what He said, what He stood for, how He challenged them, how He convicted them ... For them, Jesus was a menace to their life, and they needed Him gone ... Sanhedrin tried desperately to come up with a viable charge against Jesus, but none of them were sticking, which infuriated them all the more ... And then, to top it off, Jesus remains silent to all of the accusations (61) ... The witnesses knew what they said were lies; the High Priest knew this; Jesus knew this ... In front of His accusers, Jesus did not give them the satisfaction of having their lies challenged ... The Sanhedrin was going to do what they wanted done no matter what rebuttal came from Jesus; as He said before, **it was necessary** for things to play out as they were, so He remained silent (Is53:7)

- The High Priest then asks a question that turns out to be the climax moment in Mark's gospel regarding the identity of Jesus Christ ... All along there has been somewhat of a secrecy concerning Jesus' identity – He has told people, including disciples, to remain silent about Him being the long-awaited Messiah ... The reason being that Jesus was trying to control people's understanding of what was meant by the title Messiah ... For Jewish people, the Messiah was a man sent by God, who would rise up an army, overthrow all Jewish oppression, establish a physical kingdom of God on earth ... For Jesus, the title Messiah involved so much more than simply dealing with the physical ... For Him, the Messiah was God in flesh, who would rightly represent God before mankind, live a perfect life, die in man's place, fully paying for their sins, freeing them from sin's bondage and death's grip, providing eternal life, peace with God, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, and He would rightly represent mankind before God in Heaven
 - However, at this moment, when secrecy was no longer needed, Jesus was ready and wanting for people to know Him as the Messiah – their Messiah ... So, Caiaphas questions, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” ... Jesus responds, “I AM” – alluding back to Ex3:14, where the Lord reveals His name to Moses as “I AM” ... Then Jesus combines two messianic prophecies – Ps110:1, Dan7:13
 - Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was at hand; now Jesus declares that He is the King of God's Kingdom and appointed Judge of the world ... Thus, Jesus declares that He is the eternal Son of God ... With this statement, Jesus foreshadows His Resurrection, Ascension and Second Coming ... His testimony should have caused every person to come to their senses in repentance – it was such a forceful moment ... Instead, it only fueled their rage and hatred ... Again, it was necessary that He die on the cross in order for everything else to come about according to plan ... High Priest used the words of Jesus to charge Him with blasphemy ... Simpson, even the condemnation of Jesus was brought about by His own doing
 - Standing there as a condemned man, some of the Sanhedrin members began to spit on Him and hit Him – signs of rejection and contempt ... Then some of the temple guards joined in, and they blindfolded Him and hit Him, saying, “Prophecy who hit you” (Is50:6-7; 53:3,8) ... They were the ones committing blasphemy
- All while this is happening to Jesus, below in the courtyard is Peter ... He had followed Jesus from a distance, and has been warming himself by a fire in the courtyard, and it's very probable that he can see, or at least hear, what is going on above, where Jesus is being tried by the Sanhedrin
 - What follows next is Peter's denial of knowing Jesus, just as predicted earlier that night ... France says that Mark is contrasting both of these stories as an element of discipleship – witnessing under pressure; being willing to lay down your life no matter the cost ... Jesus will go to death, but will do so with His integrity kept ... Peter will escape more questioning, but will do so with his integrity lost ... “Serious food for thought for Mark's readers as they assessed their own faithfulness and witness in a hostile world”
 - We should include ourselves in this assessment ... Let us not presume that we will pass such persecution ... We need to rightly depend upon the Holy Spirit to give us the faith and endurance when the time comes, and it will come one day
- Jesus stands before us as the Messiah that we need, and deep down the One that we want – how will we respond? ... We do not have the right to put Him on trial; but He will hear your objections and questions and fears ... He will listen to you ... And with nail scarred hands, He will reach out to you saying, “I have done all of this to save you” ... His grace finds us just as we are ... We come empty handed to receive all that He has and all that He is