

Jesus on Trial, Pt 1
Mark 14:53-65 (12/06/15)
Ernie Godshall
Faith Bible Church
Evansville, Indiana

Some trials keep America riveted to the courtroom, and when the final verdict is handed down, you wonder if justice was served. Take the O. J. Simpson case of 1995. Eight months of trial for two counts of murder, and finally acquitted. On the other hand, you have cases like Thomas Haynesworth of Richmond, Virginia, who was found guilty of vile crimes and sentenced to 84 years in prison. He insisted on his innocence and after doing 27 years, he was vindicated and released as innocent.

This morning we come to what must be the most shameful, the most disgusting, the most horrible trial of all time as Jesus is brought in to be charged by the top Jewish authorities in Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin. What happened in these dark early Friday-morning hours makes you want to scream or vomit. They will end up spitting into His face, beating Him, and cuffing Him with their hands. It would be bad enough if they did this to someone like George Washington or Charles Spurgeon or your father or mother, or your children. But they do this to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the perfectly innocent, loving, spotless Lamb of God! The only consolation we have is that this was part of the cup Jesus was willing to drink for our salvation.

In the worst miscarriage of justice in history, Jesus was...

Brought to a hearing with no charges. In this world, the vilest of men often have the authority – vv. 53-54

They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together. Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire.

Most Bible scholars agree that Jesus went through two trials, the first religious, the second civil. And both trials had three stages. As they bring Jesus in, John's Gospel tells us they first went to Annas' house. Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the current high priest. Annas had been the high priest in Jerusalem for many years, but was removed for corruption by Herod. But Annas was still the power behind the religious establishment in Jerusalem. His family ruled the temple and the Sanhedrin and were notoriously corrupt and greedy and wealthy. They had turned the temple into a house of merchandise and a den of robbers. Jesus had called them out on this earlier. The Talmud said, "Woe to the house of Annas! Woe to their serpent's hiss!"

As they bring Jesus first to Annas and then to Caiaphas' house where the Sanhedrin gathered, they have no charges. Jesus knew full well their corruption. He knew their hypocrisy. He knew their intentions. He knew they had no charges on Him. He knew He was being brought before a kangaroo court and their one purpose was to come up with a charge that Pilate would accept as worthy of death!

One of the hardest things to deal with is that in this world the vilest of men often sit in seats of authority and judgment! It's mind-boggling and so frustrating. You know the hypocrisy. You know the corruption, the manipulating, the fabricating, the lies and cover-up behind so much that is being said and done. Jesus knew all this and more as he is hustled into Caiaphas' house and placed in the middle of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was made up of 70 members, plus the High Priest. They sat in a semicircle on elevated chairs so they could see each other. The accused was seated in the middle with guards at his side. There was also a place for witnesses.

Though the Jews had developed a sophisticated system of jurisprudence over the years, in this trial all rules and legalities were thrown to the wind. Every step of Jesus' trial was illegal according to their own rules. The trial itself was held in the wrong place, at the wrong time, with undue haste, with false witnesses bribed and brought in, and conducted on a feast day. Ultimately they forced the accused to incriminate Himself and they did not wait the required 24 hours for sentencing. These vile men sitting in

their seats of authority had one purpose, to have this Man who threatened their corrupt system crucified! As Jesus sat there in silence, He knew all this.

Verse 54 tells us Peter was there in the shadows of the courtyard. He witnessed all this. And when he wrote in 1 Peter about Jesus being our example, he knew what he was talking about. We'll see more of this in a bit.

Charged with false and conflicting testimonies. When you are falsely accused, remember God will judge righteously – vv. 55-59

Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. Some stood up and began to give false testimony against Him, saying, "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'" Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.

Deuteronomy 17:6 clearly states, "On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness." Here's what made this a kangaroo court. They had already condemned Him. Now they just needed to find some worthless men to bear witness against Him and bring charges. But they did not succeed! Even when they used His words, they twisted them. Jesus didn't say He would destroy the temple; He said they would destroy His body, and in three days He would raise it up! He wasn't talking about Herod's temple; He was talking about His body!

Has anyone ever falsely accused you? There may be a time to speak up, but seldom does it do any good. Has anyone ever twisted your words to make them say what you never meant? That is surely one of the hardest things to deal with in this life. So it is here with Jesus! And even more so with Jesus, for you know He could have vaporized this whole nest of corruption in an instant.

But there He sat, hearing all these false and conflicting charges. What did He do? Peter witnessed this from the shadows and described His Lord in 1 Peter 2:21-23.

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.

When you desperately want to defend yourself, when you know they are lying, when your character is being attacked, reviled, what do you do? What does it mean to be like Christ? Learn from Christ here. He is not only our Savior, but our example for living in a corrupt, wicked culture. First, He wasn't guilty of any of their charges. Second, when they reviled and put Him down, He didn't react in kind. It never helps to return evil for evil. What did He do? He knew as preposterous as their efforts were, ultimately God will right all wrongs. He kept entrusting Himself to God, who judges righteously.

What should you do when falsely accused? Trust your God! Cast that on God. Entrust yourself to God. There may be lies and evil treatment now, but God will judge righteously! Every evil act will be corrected. We said it last week. Romans 12 says, "'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord!"

Accused of being Who He is. Never lose the hope of Christ exalted and returning in great power and glory – vv. 60-62

The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do you not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against you?" But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."

Here comes Joseph Caiaphas, like a lion roaring over his prey! He's the supreme justice here! He's frustrated with Jesus just calmly, quietly sitting there! He must have been thinking about how God's Word is being fulfilled. Listen to these descriptions:

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.

Psalms 22:12-13 Many bulls have surrounded me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. They open wide their mouth at me, As a ravening and a roaring lion.

Psalm 22 may be predict the cross, but already here at the trial these religious haters have Him surrounded, with Caiaphas now in the middle, in His face, demanding an answer, demanding that He incriminate Himself. In Matt 26:63 Caiaphas puts Him under oath, "I adjure you by the living God!" He didn't realize he was talking to God Himself! "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God!" (John 1:1). Caiaphas targets the one issue, "Tell us, ARE YOU THE MESSIAH, THE UNIQUE SON OF GOD?" Shrewd Caiaphas knew he had Him.

This is so much like Luther at the Diet of Worms in 1521 when he was brought before both the religious and civil authorities when they finally demanded an answer, "Do you renounce these books and the errors which they contain?" You know his answer, "Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils alone, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, so help me God!" Luther's enemies hissed like snakes and howled like wolves, "Away with him! Such a heretic should not be allowed to live!" Luther wasn't the last Reformer to be falsely accused like his Lord was.

Look what happens here. "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" Ah, you want to be there for this. Now Jesus confesses, "I am!" Mouths all around dropped and they all knew they had Him! But Jesus goes on in chilling calmness and riveting authority, "Not only am I the Messiah, but the time is coming when you will see Me exalted to the very highest position with God Almighty, at His right hand, the place of highest power." If that's not enough, He continues, "I'm coming back to this earth in the clouds, like Daniel 7:13-14 said! I am coming as the judge of all mankind, including you, Caiaphas. Believe Me. You will see Me unveiled then as the Anointed One, the Messiah of God!" Let's read this powerful prophecy of Christ in Daniel 7:13-14.

I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

What a thrill! What hope this is in the midst of this filthy, corrupt, vile pile of hypocrisy and corruption. Jesus, like a diamond flashes forth truth among this den of hypocrites. He is light blazing out in this darkness. He is hope. He is the Messiah and He will return in great power and glory! He is only here to drink that awful cup of divine wrath so you and I could drink the cup of salvation, so our sins could be forgiven, so He could bring us to God Almighty! This confession should have swept them all off their chairs onto their knees and faces to worship Him! What happens next defies all comprehension. It is hard to endure. It is utterly horrifying to even read it, let alone believe it actually happened.

Abused as guilty of blasphemy. When you are reviled for the name of Christ, keep on rejoicing. – vv. 63-65

Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? "You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophesy!" And the officers received Him with slaps in the face.

In sheer hypocrisy Caiaphas acts as if he is shocked and horrified at this confession, but inside he was gleeful and giddy. Christ's words were exactly what Caiaphas wanted to hear! This will give them a reason for Pilate to have Him crucified. If Jesus claims to be Messiah, then He will be seen as an enemy of Caesar and a fomenter of insurrection. So Caiaphas grabs both his tunics below his chin and rips them down to his waist. What a deceiver.

And contrary to all the rules of jurisprudence Caiaphas cries out, "He has blasphemed. He is guilty of death. What say you?" And all around that room this pack of wolves cried out, "Aye! Aye!" The very center of Jewish authority, the very heart of Israel's religious leaders where justice should be carried, it is horribly miscarried. All confessed Jesus as worthy of death! Can you believe it?

Out of their mouths flies the spit of the serpent! Some think Caiaphas was the first to bend over and spit into Jesus face. Not just one, but they lined up. This must be the biggest human insult one can receive. I once saw a Jewish friend of my father who ran a business in our market have a customer spit at him over the counter. I don't know what it was about, but it was a very degrading, spiteful act. In addition to spitting on Jesus, they covered His face, pummeled His face with their fists, and mocked Him. "Tell us, Messiah. Who hit you?" And then they turn Jesus over to the guards standing by who beat Him with severe slaps and blows to His face and head, whacking Him with forceful strokes!

This can't be happening! This is revolting! It makes you want to vomit! This is God Almighty! He is our Creator! He upholds the universe and provides us with everything we need to live and breathe. He is that beautiful baby in that manger in Bethlehem of whom the angels said, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord!" Joy to the World! But this? No, no. It is too hard to watch.

Here's a lesson. What does Jesus do in response? Not a murmur. Not a complaint. Not a sharp rebuke. Edersheim explains, "He was drinking slowly, with the consciousness of willing self-surrender, the Cup which the Father had given Him." This is the cost of your salvation! This He endured for sinners, for you, for me. He was made a curse for us! He received every blow because He loved us and gave Himself for us!

Don't fool yourself; given the right situation, this world does the same today. Many spit and mock our Lord Jesus. And they will mock you who live for Christ. Peter tells us how we should respond.

1 Peter 4:13-14 But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

Jesus is now headed for Pilate. In Mark 15:1 the Sanhedrin covers their illegal proceedings of the night by an early morning consultation and they agree to deliver Jesus to Pilate.

And this is when Judas realized they had condemned him to death. In anguish of soul he went to his spiritual shepherds and confessed, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood!" "What is that to us?" they sneered, "See to it yourself." In horror of soul he hurled the 30 pieces of silver right into the holy place of the temple and went out and hung himself.

What can we say to all this, this greatest miscarriage of justice ever? This is where our sin and guilt took Jesus! This is what our sin cost Jesus! He was spit upon, beat, and slapped. "Man of sorrows, what a name, for the Son of God who came. Ruined sinners to reclaim, Hallelujah, what a Savior!"