

Message #56

Mark 14:53-65

There have been court trials in our lifetime that have captivated us. There was of course the O. J. Simpson trial in Los Angeles in 1995; there was the Scott Petersen trial in Redwood in 2004; there was the Casey Anthony trial in Orlando in 2011, and then there was the Jodie Arias trial in Phoenix in 2012. Each of these trials were trials against cold-blooded killers. Simpson butchered his ex-wife and her friend; Petersen executed his pregnant wife; Anthony murdered her little daughter and Arias sliced up her former boyfriend. But as you watched the trials, at times, it was almost as if the court was going overboard to protect the rights of the killers. In some cases, key evidence was not even admitted because they wanted to protect their rights.

We have in our judicial courts a fundamental protection right called “Presumption of Innocence.” In criminal law what this actually means is that the state has the responsibility to prove the defendant is guilty and the defendant does not have to prove he is innocent. If someone is arrested, the state must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant is guilty.

Now this principle was not an invention of 4th Amendment of the constitution of the United States; this was as old as Roman law. There was a document from the 6th century that discussed legal matters that can be traced back to the days of the Apostles and the law says, “proof lies on him who asserts, not him who denies.”

Even the worst of criminals typically gets this due process of law. Even the most diabolical murderers have this right. But it did not work that way for Jesus Christ. The most significant trial in the history of the world is the trial of Jesus Christ. What happens to Him has eternal ramifications. But from a judicial standpoint, this is a farce.

Jesus Christ was the perfect, innocent Son of God. He never did one thing wrong. He never said one thing wrong. Yet He was arrested and hauled into multiple courts and **prevailing legal decision of the court was “He is guilty even though the facts don’t support it and even though we can’t prove it.”**

What most people don’t understand is that this terrible injustice was really the ultimate display of God’s justice. God’s judicial program was operating behind the scenes and ultimately it would be this judicial farce in the Roman courts that would lead to the greatest judicial moment in God’s court. **This death of Christ carried out by this corrupt earthly court would make it possible for God to justify sinners in His heavenly court.** As we come to this section of Scripture, what we see is this:

JESUS CHRIST WAS ILLEGALLY ARRESTED AND FALSELY ACCUSED IN COURT SO THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL LEADERS COULD CONDEMN HIM TO DEATH.

This is all a set up. This is all illegal. They want a conviction and they want Christ killed. But what these people don’t realize is that God is the One setting it all up (Acts 4:27-28).

We may recall that Jesus had been in the garden up on the Mount of Olives and Judas led a group of armed soldiers up the mountain to arrest Christ (14:46). They had to ascend several hundred feet up and travel a couple miles to get Him. When they got up there they forcefully grabbed Him and manhandled Him and hauled Him down the mountain for Jesus' first trial.

According to **verse 53**, they led Christ away to appear before the high priest, the chief priests, the elders and the scribes. All the big phony religious pretenders are here. Now Mark does not describe all the events that took place. For example, we know that Jesus has a preliminary hearing before Annas, before Caiaphas, who was the real high priest. Mark picks up the narrative emphasizing just one high priest.

Even though it is past midnight, now Friday morning, all of these leaders had no problem rushing into this meeting. Actually this is against the law. This mock trial was being held in the middle of the night and Jewish law said that trials were to be held during the day.

These leaders were waiting for Him. This was a team of the religious elite in Jerusalem. It is quite obvious this was a put up job and they were expecting them to haul Christ into their courts. This is nothing more than a kangaroo court, some resemblance of a court scene that totally disregards all rules of law.

Mark does not name the high priest but we know it was Caiaphas, who held this office from A.D. 18-36 (Matt. 26:57). Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas, the former high priest who had been removed from office in A.D. 15 (Acts 4:6). Even though Annas was the retired high priest, he still was involved in religious things and apparently carried quite a bit of weight over the religious leaders (Luke 3:2)

So Jesus is hauled into court before the key high priests, the ruling priests who controlled religious life, the elders who controlled the people and the scribes, who were the Biblical scholars. Jesus is up against all of them. They are all against Him and they have gathered together to kill Him. He has no attorney; He has no legal representation, it is just Jesus against all of them.

According to **verse 54**, Peter had followed the mob at a distance, but he was sitting in the courtyard with the officers warming himself. The reason why Mark adds this point is because Peter is telling him what he did as a prelude to him denying Christ three times.

We may remember that all the disciples fled (**verse 50**) when Jesus was arrested and apparently Peter doubled back to follow at a distance. Peter actually had enough nerve to go into the courtyard of the high priest. This was some "open air" courtyard outside the residence of the high priest and Peter was sitting by the guards warming himself by the fire.

Now there are two specific groups brought out in this part of the narrative:

GROUP #1 – The Sanhedrin tries to cross-examine Christ so they can kill Him. **14:55-59**

This is not a legal trial; this is a railroad job. All of the religious leaders, called the Sanhedrin or the Council, were at this middle of the night charade trying to figure out a way to kill Jesus Christ.

According to **verse 55**, they kept trying to obtain some form of testimony that would enable them to kill him. Apparently, they had brought in some false witnesses to testify against Christ. But they were not finding anything that would be a reason to execute Him. There was not one bit of evidence against Jesus Christ.

We see from **verse 56** that many people were giving false testimony against Him, but there was no consistency to the testimony. In other words, there were contradictions among those giving the false testimony. There were all kinds of discrepancies in their stories.

In a capital case where one receives the death penalty, according to O.T. law there needed to be at least two witnesses (Num. 35:30; **Deut. 17:6; 19:15**).

Now also in the O.T. law it is clearly stated that one is not to bear “false witness.” So what we have here is a bunch of people specifically standing up giving “false testimony” against Christ. These were the people who should have been prosecuted.

But the problem with false testimony is that there is no consistency to it. There was no solid case. This is a completely fraudulent case. The whole basis for their allegations against Jesus Christ is a bunch of invented lies.

According to **verse 57**, some people in the audience, who weren't even on the stand, just stood up and started making up false allegations. They weren't even sworn in; they just stood up and started yelling stuff. This should have been a contempt of court.

One of the things they alleged is that Jesus said He would destroy the Temple in Jerusalem that had been built with hands and that He would build another Temple after He destroyed it without hands (**verse 58**).

Actually when Jesus made the statement to which they are referring, He was referring to His own body (John 2:19-22). Jesus was talking about the fact that they would kill Him and three days later He would come back to life. It is significant to note that He made this statement after the first time He chased the money changers and den of thieves out of His Temple (John 2:14-17).

The Jews responded to Jesus and said, “what gives you the right to do this?” Let's see you show us some sign that you really are the Messiah. So Jesus said, the sign you will see is that you will kill Me and three days later I will come back from the dead.

So many of these false witnesses had apparently been there to see this and hear this. What they did is twist the facts to try and make it mean He was going to destroy the Temple. This was the best they could do. This was their best shot at getting something on Him. These were false witnesses brought in to try and convict Christ with their false testimony. But according to **verse 59**, there was no consistency even to their allegations. They couldn't get their stories straight.

This must have been frustrating because everyone here wants Christ convicted and yet their chief witnesses keep trapping themselves with their inconsistencies.

Mark stresses the fact that there was no consistency to the testimony. The false witnesses kept tripping over their own stories.

GROUP #2 – The High Priest stood to cross-examine Jesus. **14:60-63**

Now the High Priest, Caiaphas, realizes that the testimony of the false witnesses isn't cutting it. So he decides to jump into the situation to see if he can get something on Him.

Jesus was just standing there saying nothing and Caiaphas was, as one commentator said, at his "wits end."

So in **verse 60**, he said to Jesus aren't you going to answer? These people are testifying against you, what do you have to say to all of these allegations?

Jesus did not answer a word so finally Caiaphas said in **verse 61** "Are you the Christ/Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" This is a point blank question asked of Jesus Christ. There was nothing about His look that suggested He was the Glorious Son of God. You could not physically see it. But had they thought about where He was born and the miracles He performed, they should have easily recognized His identity. But Caiaphas asked Him straight up.

Bill O'Reilly, the Fox News commentator, who likes to pretend to be so scholarly even in Biblical things, is Biblically illiterate on many points. One of them is this one right here. He publicly said that Jesus never said He was the Messiah before He was raised from the dead. Well, Bill, read your Bible, yes he did. He did so right here in **verse 62** before He was crucified.

When Jesus was asked if He was the Messiah in **verse 62**, He said, "I am." In other words, "yes I am." Not only did Jesus say that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. But He said you will one day see Me, the Divine/Person, Son of man, sitting at the right hand of God the Father and you will also see Me coming with the clouds of heaven.

In other words, you are setting there on your little perch judging Me, well let Me tell you- you will get to see Me again and the next time you see Me, I will judge you.

We know that Jesus is presently seated at the right hand of God the Father waiting for the moment when He will return (Acts 2:32-36). Daniel describes this as an epoch moment (Dan. 7:13-14), when the Ancient of Days will come back to take over the world.

Now from a careful eschatological analysis we believe that for unbelievers they will first see Christ come with the clouds and then they will stand before the Great White Throne judgment and see Him sitting on His Throne before He casts them into everlasting fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

The second coming of Jesus Christ will be a monumental event that apparently will be witnessed by all dead and by all living and for guys like this, it will mean their doom.

When Caiaphas heard Jesus say that, according to **verse 63**, he started tearing his clothes and said we do not need any more witnesses. We have heard His blasphemy. According to the Mishnah, when blasphemy occurred the judges were to stand to their feet and tear their garments. According to **verse 64**, they all condemned Him to death right then and there.

We would ask just exactly where is the blasphemy? What Jesus says is only blasphemous if it isn't true. But if He is the Messiah and if He is the Son of God, then there is no blasphemy here.

We know that God the Father stated for many of these people to hear that He was His Son at His baptism (Mark 1:11) and at His transfiguration (Mark 9:7). We also know that the demons testified multiple times as to His identity (Mark 1:24, 34; 3:11; 5:7). Then of course there was Peter's own testimony (Mark 8:29). Furthermore, He had ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey and vast numbers of people identified Him as the Davidic King (Mark 11:9-11). So the evidence was overwhelming. There is no blasphemy here. Jesus is the Messiah and He is the Son of God.

Now in **verse 64**, after the verdict the court officials started mocking and punching the prisoner. This trial is a farce. I just saw a husband whose wife was shot in the head say that when he was sitting in the trial of the man who did it, he wanted to jump over the barrier and beat the killer. Had he done that, he would have been in serious trouble. At the trial of Jesus it was encouraged. You could do what you want to the prisoner.

According to **verse 65**, people spit on Him, they blindfolded Him and beat Him with their fists and told Him to prophesy who hit Him. The officers slapped Him in the face.

Do you see this? These are the leading religious leaders and they literally hate Jesus Christ. These were the self-righteous religious leaders who were leading the worship services and they not only don't like Jesus Christ, they hate Him, they mock Him, they are spitting on Him and punching Him. **Jesus just stands there and takes it.**

Think very seriously about this. Why would anyone just stand there and take this? **It was predicted by Isaiah that the Messiah would be treated like this and that "He did not open His mouth" (Is. 53:7).** If this happened to you or me, we would be either protesting or fighting back.

If Jesus were not who He claimed to be, there is absolutely no reason for Him to put up with this. There is no reason for Him to stand there and let this happen. The only way this makes sense is if He is the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy.

Isaiah 50:6 predicted that the Messiah/Savior would let people beat Him and spit on Him. Isaiah 53 says He was our guilt offering. All of us like sheep have gone astray and the Lord caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

So He stood there and did not open His mouth so that He could be led like a Lamb to slaughter (Is. 53:7).

One other thing I want to point out. There is evidence that some of the men who were at this farce of a trial and were involved in this evil, did eventually come to faith in Christ. Peter was out on the courtyard, so he wasn't inside to see this; but the religious leaders were.

In other words, there is a good chance that Jesus Christ ended up saving some of the very sinners who did these evil things to Him.

Now if He can save them, He can save any of us. No matter what your past with its sin and stain, come to Christ and He will wash your sins away.