

Gospel of Mark Chapter 14E

Over the years the US Supreme Court has made a few monumental decisions; significantly affecting the morality of our nation.

1954 Brown v Board of Education - Decided that the separation of black and white students in public school was unconstitutional.

1973 Roe V Wade - Decided that a woman has a constitutional right to have an abortion during the first two trimesters of her pregnancy.

2015 Obergefell V Hodges - Decreed same sex marriages to be legal in all 50 states. Five unelected officials changed the definition of marriage that has stood for 6000 years.

- Our Society's departure from the Biblical standards of morality is easy to track when you review the decisions of the Supreme Court over a period of 50 – 60 years.

This morning we will look at the departure from Biblical JUSTICE that occurred at trial of our Lord Jesus.

- After viewing the evidence I think you will agree that the trial of the Lord Jesus Christ was greatest judicial injustice in the history of mankind.

This morning as we study this trial our investigation will follow these four points.

- The Origin of Justice - God is Just
- The Mandate for Justice - God Ordained that his people reflect his justice.
- The Miscarriage of Justice - In the trial of Jesus Christ
- Sovereignty Despite Injustice - God sovereignly accomplishes his will despite injustice.

1. The origin of Justice

The Bible clearly reveals that God is Just: He is the root, the origin and the standard of perfect justice.

Deut 32: 3 **For I will proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God!**

4 **“The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”**

Zephaniah 3: 5 **The LORD within her (w/in the city of Jerusalem) is righteous; he does no injustice; every morning he shows forth his justice; each dawn he does not fail; but the unjust knows no shame.**

- The Bible CLEARLY reveals the fact that God is JUST!
- Since Man was created in the image of God, it stands to reason that he would have a sincere desire for justice. However because he is fallen in sin he has lost the ability to bring about those just desires.

Consider the examples of so called justice that are paraded in front of us on the silver screen.

- The justice that comes out of Hollywood begins with a villain abducting the hero's daughter and then the hero kills dozens of people and blows up a multitude of buildings in order to get his daughter back. Is that *“An eye for an eye?”* Is it Justice or revenge?

2. The Mandate for Justice - God ordained that his people reflect his justice.

God's people Israel, the nation that he has chosen for himself, the same ones He called to be a light to the Gentiles were commanded in God's Word to display the justice of God in all of their dealings with one another.

Deut 16: 18 "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.

19 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.

20 Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Throughout their history the Elders of Israel made efforts to take this mandate seriously. They developed a sophisticated system of Jurist Prudence, a system of justice that reflected the just heart of God.

- They had a system of law, a system of courts and judges, prosecutors and defenders that should have been able to maintain justice.
- We have a good deal of historical information available to us to know how that system was operating in the time when Jesus visited his people.

The Law was carefully applied in every locality throughout Israel.

There were synagogues in just about every town throughout the nation and it was the synagogue that served as the center of justice.

- In every town where there were 120 Jewish men they had a local court that was ruled by a Sanhedrin that was made up of 23 men. (*odd number to avoid a stalemate*)
- Those 23 men were designated as "Elders" and they sat as judges in the court.
- Smaller localities where there weren't 120 Jewish men still choose men to serve as Elders and judges. (3,5,7 men)
- These counsels were responsible for governing every community throughout Israel. They were the ones who made decisions on legal matters of every kind.

Jerusalem had the Supreme Court: The "Great Sanhedrin" 70 plus 1 (The High Priest)

Their rule was absolute, their rulings were final and there were no appeals or exceptions.

- All trials were required to be PUBLIC.
- All trials were required to provide both a prosecution and a defense.
- No accusation could be accepted without the required 2 or 3 witnesses.

Bearing false witness in Israel was considered a very serious crime. (Perjury today)

Deut 19: 16 **If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, 17 then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days.**

18 The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, 19 then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

- If it was found that an individual bore false witness in an Israeli court that individual would receive the penalty that should have gone to the party against whom he bore false witness.

- If someone lied about his neighbor saying that he saw him in the very act of adultery and he was found to be a false witness, he would receive the punishment for adultery. (Stoning)
- As you might expect this law severely limited the cases of perjury in Israel.

Just a few more facts about Israeli law that will help us see the gross miscarriage of justice that took place against our Lord.

- When the penalty of death was given there was a mandatory waiting period before the execution to allow for any further evidence to arise. (24 Hours)
- The witnesses who bore testimony against the guilty party were required to inflict the first blows in the execution. If the execution was by way of stoning then the witnesses were required to cast the first stone. (*That shines a bit of light on the woman caught in adultery - Jesus said, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."*)

Few more rules for Justice in Israel:

- No criminal could be tried at night. No criminal could be tried through the night. No criminal could be tried in the afternoon because the trial might last into the night.
- Judges were required to fast through the trial as a show of humility and the seriousness of their responsibility.
- Trials were not permitted on the Sabbath, never allowed on a Feast Day (like Passover) and not permitted on the day before a feast day.
- If the judges were unanimous in their decision the case was thrown out because the judgment was considered to be unmerciful.

Having said all of that it is clear that the Trial of the Lord Jesus violated ALL Israeli laws. It violated all principals of justice so that we can honestly say it was the greatest miscarriage of justice to ever take place.

3. Miscarriage of Justice

Under the cover of night the Lord Jesus would actually undergo 6 trials; 3 Ecclesiastical trials and 3 civil trials before his final conviction and crucifixion a mere 8 hours after his arrest. (NONE of the Gospels contain all 6... *we have to read them together*)

- Upon his arrest Jesus was immediately taken to the home of Annas. We find that in John: John 18:13, **First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.**
- Annas was the corrupt Godfather behind the priestly mafia of Jesus' day.
- He served as High Priest from AD 6 to AD 15. And he was succeeded by 5 of his own sons and the current High Priest Caiaphas was Annas' son in-law. (*all in the family*)
- Remember when Jesus cleansed the temple I told you that the corrupt marketplace in the temple was called "The Bazaar of Annas." It was Annas' greed and racketeering that was responsible for the corruption of the temple.
- No doubt they brought the Lord to him first because he was the catalyst behind the plot to destroy Jesus.
- Mark picks up the narrative in Jesus' second illegal trial at the home of Caiaphas

Mark 14:53 **And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together.**

- At this second trial Jesus stands before ALL of the chief priests, elders and Scribes. That would be the Great Sanhedrin meeting at the home of Caiaphas.
- And this trial took place somewhere between 2:30 and 3:00 AM on the morning of the Passover celebration.
 - Strange: We never hear ANY objections raised, no one said, wait a minute this is illegal. We can't meet at night. We aren't allowed to meet on a Feast day. We cannot render a judgment in ANY case right now!
- Verse 54 tells us that there was a curious observer standing in the background watching this miscarriage of justice take place with great apprehension.

Mark 14: 54 **And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire.**

- Peter's position bears witness to what is taking place in his heart. He is close enough to observe Jesus but far enough away so as not to be associated with him.

James Edwards: "How awkward Peter looks in the courtyard of the high priest, trying to mingle with the henchmen who probably arrested Jesus and who will presently mock and beat him."

- Surely his heart LONGS to be standing by Jesus' side but his flesh will be quick to deny any association with him. (*We will cover this in detail next week*)
- Remember that Mark's Gospel comes by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Peter himself, so we have here a firsthand account of Jesus' trial.

Mark 14:55 **Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none.**

- The council had already determined the outcome; they were going to put Jesus to death. All they needed to do was find a crime worthy of the death sentence.
- In order to accuse Jesus of a crime, they needed someone give testimony against him. The execution is already set, but they needed to make it look like it was a just decision.
- The problem was, they could not find ANYONE to testify against the Lord Jesus BECAUSE he had done NO wrong. He was the sinless Son of God.

Even Pilate would say, "**See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him.**" (John 19:4)

- When no witnesses could be found they paid men to bare false witness against Him.

56 **For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree.**

57 **And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying,**

58 **"We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" 59 Yet even about this their testimony did not agree.**

- In the Gospel of John when Jesus spoke of his impending death he said, "**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**" He spoke of his BODY!
 - When Jesus spoke of Herod's Temple he DID tell his disciples it would be destroyed but he never said it would be rebuilt.
- The testimony against Jesus at this point is false testimony that was arranged and paid for by the chief priests.
 - Unfortunately for Caiaphas, the testimony of these false-witnesses is not going well.

- Their statements contradict one another and despite all of the efforts, all of their plans and schemes none of the charges are sufficient to put Jesus to death.

Mark 14: 60 **And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?”** 61 **But he remained silent and made no answer.**

- The High Priest is ranting and raving over nothing.
- No formal indictment was ever brought against the Lord Jesus,
- The hearing is illegal by Jewish law, Judas received a bribe to betray Him, the witnesses have been bribed, He is being tried in the middle of the night on a Feast day in home of the High Priest.
- In Vs 61, Jesus refuses to incriminate himself. He remained silent before his accusers just as Isaiah foretold:
- These men knew the Word of God, did they not remember the words of Isaiah

Isaiah 53: 7 **He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.**

- By his silence, Jesus unmasked their lying hearts, their treachery was fully exposed. And yet Jesus is majestic in His silence.
- Little do they know: Their willful, murderous hearts are actually fulfilling the sovereign decree of God. (*The Lamb would be slain on Passover*)
- By now, the High Priest senses that he is losing ground. He needs to make a bold move. He has one card left in his hand.

Mark 14:61b **Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”**

- Matthew adds:

Matthew 26: **And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”**

With these words, the High Priest places Jesus under a serious oath. **I adjure you by the living God**

- **“I place an oath on you,” “remember that God punishes liars,”** The hypocrisy in his statement would be laughable if it were not so tragic,
- In his sin Caiaphas is totally blind to the personal implications of his own words, **“I adjure You by the living God who hates liars, who punishes liars, tell the truth.”**
- In light of this oath, Jesus breaks his silence and responds to the question: **tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.**

Mark 14: 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.”**

- His response is powerful. He doesn't leave room for any doubt. He speaks the Word of God and confirms his true identity.
- He says **“I am”** (ego emi) This is the name by which God revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush. **“I am that I am”**

Psalm 110:1, The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

Daniel 7:13, I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man,

- Upon hearing this the High Priest immediately responded.

Mark 14: 63 And the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further witnesses do we need? 64 You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death. 65 And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophecy!” And the guards received him with blows.

- The tearing of the garments was the priest’s response to what they believed to be blasphemy.
- Of course this was NOT blasphemy, Jesus was not speaking against God he was declaring himself to BE God, Adonai, the Son of Man.
- And with those words the physical abuse begins.....

Isaiah 53: 4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

- The injustice that Christ faced would enable sinful men to obtain a righteous standing before God.
- That righteous standing comes by the sovereign grace of a loving God who gave his one and only son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sin.
- The injustice of man could not overcome the LOVE of God for his precious people.

4. Sovereignty Despite Injustice

The question that often arises among people as they face injustice is where is God?

- You may have asked that question yourself or tried to answer it for a friend.
- Most people respond in anger when they experience injustice. They question the character and sovereignty of God.
 - If God is good WHY? How could God allow? Where was God when?

It amazes me how quickly people question the character of God, as if they could come up with a better path to bring about justice in a sin corrupted world.

In light of what we have studied this morning, I would ask that you consider this question: Has there ever been an individual, throughout all of human history, who suffered more, who endured greater injustice than the Lord Jesus Christ?

- He was an innocent man, perfect in righteousness and yet he was falsely accused, spit upon, beaten beyond human recognition, scourged and nailed to a cross. And God who is just laid upon him His full unmitigated wrath.
- Where is the justice in that?
 - The justice in Christ’s suffering is found in the fact that HE bore God’s JUST and holy wrath for OUR sin so that we who were guilty could receive GRACE and mercy from a JUST and HOLY God
- Listen to the Words of the Apostle Peter:

1 Peter 2: 22 (Remembering the trial of the Lord Peter writes) **He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.**

- Jesus did not respond in bitterness, he did not complain, he did not bring an accusation against the Father or question his character; Instead He **“Kept on entrusting himself to HIM who judges justly.”**
- Isn't that the essence of FAITH? Trusting, holding fast to a Sovereign God you can't SEE.

Jesus knew the Father. He knew his character, he knew His Word, His plans and decrees.

- He knows the Father is Almighty, omnipotent, nothing is too difficult for him.
- He knows the Father is Good, he **cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.**
- He knows that perfect justice is an essential characteristic of God the Father.
- He knows that the Father cannot lie.
- He knows the Father is faithful and true.
- He knows the Father is absolutely sovereign over all of his creation.

For Us: The Word of God reveals these SAME glorious attributes of the Father.

Knowing God through His Word provides the comfort and the strength that we need to face all of the injustices that arise in this sin ravaged world.

Puritan Arthur Dent wrote: *“For every one of us, when we do confess God to be Almighty, do acknowledge that He by His providence rules everything.”*

- We may not understand his providence completely but we trust in his Word.

Heidelberg Catechism Question 28 “What advantage is it to us to know that God has created, and by his providence upholds all things?”

ANSWER: “That we may be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity; and that in all things which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from His love; since all creatures are so in His hand that without His will cannot so much as move.”

Friends, It is ONLY when we begin to understand God's glorious and sovereign rule that we can begin to grasp the truth behind Paul's statement:

Romans 8: 28 **And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.**

- In spite of all of the deceitful scheming and murderous plots of sinful men God was able to bring about his perfect will through Jesus Christ.
- This SAME Sovereign, omnipotent and Loving God is able to bring about GOOD for his own people from amidst the multitude of trials that we face in this fallen world.
- He could not promise this if he was not SOVERIGN.

What comfort can I receive from the Sovereignty of God?

Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,

39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.