



Speaker:  
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## The Messiah on Trial

◀ Series: The Gospel of Mark • 51 of 51

6/6/2021 (SUN) | Bible: **Mark 14:43-72**

And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

And he that betrayed him had given them a token saying, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely." And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him and saith, "Master, master", and kissed him. And they laid their hands on him and took him.

And one of them that stood by drew a sword and smote a servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. And Jesus answered and said unto them, "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching and ye took me not; but the scriptures must be fulfilled." And they all forsook him and fled.

And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.

And they led Jesus away to the high priest. And with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest, and he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.

And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death and found none. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain and bare false witness against him saying, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.'" But neither so did their witness agree together.

And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus saying, "Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?" But he held his peace and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him and said unto him, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am. And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest rent his clothes and saith, "What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy. What think ye?" And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, "Prophecy!" And the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him and said, "And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth." But he denied saying, "I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest." And he went out into the porch. And the cock crew. And a maid saw him again and began to say to them that stood by, "This is one of them." And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, "Surely thou art one of them; for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto." But he began to curse and to swear saying, "I know not this man of whom ye speak!" And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, *Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.* And when he thought thereon, he wept.

Last week, we found Jesus and the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane. As we looked at the picture Mark painted for us, we saw Jesus praying to God. In his prayer, he wavered in his mission. As difficult as it is to understand the incarnation, we found ourselves forced to accept that the humanity of Jesus Christ recoiled from the thought of the suffering he was about to face.

But his mission was never in any danger of failing. **It was in the will of God that Jesus's fear would be turned into resoluteness.** We can see this determination in the final words of the of last week's passage. He said to his disciples that they should immediately get up because they had to go meet the betrayer and the people with him. He had no thoughts of escape but intended to meet his enemies head on—not to fight them, but to *surrender* to them.

I was saying a few weeks back about the vast numbers of visitors in Jerusalem around Passover time. Even with the residents opening up their houses to accommodate the visitors, a great many “camped out” in the fields around the city walls. It'd be near impossible for the authorities to find Jesus without the help of Judas, who knew Jesus's favourite spot on the hill.

It's impossible to say just how large the group is that comes to arrest Jesus. There could be hundreds. And Jesus comments on their heavy-handed approach. They could've quietly arrested him in the temple. Maybe they thought the support Jesus had on his temple visits would cause a problem so they decided on this approach.

It turns out there was some justification for the arresting party expecting trouble. The disciples are, for a short time anyway, ready for a fight. Peter even has a go at one of them, but Jesus sharply rebukes him. Jesus will no more allow his mission to be interfered with now than when he rebuked Peter on that other occasion when he tried to persuade Jesus to stop talking about going to his death.

It must have been pretty sickening for Jesus to be betrayed in the way he was. Judas pretends to honour Jesus with his greeting, including a kiss.

There are all kinds of theories out there about why Judas decided to betray Jesus. We're not told, and I don't think we're meant to dwell too much on it. The main point is the betrayal was sinful, but God still works it into the pattern of his sovereign will.

We next see Jesus in a type of court. It's not a proper court hearing because it didn't meet the legal requirements. It was an impromptu, preliminary hearing in front of the Sanhedrin. It's unclear whether or not they had the power in this period to have Jesus stoned to death. Blasphemy wasn't illegal under Roman law, but they may or may not have given authority to the Jews to make official judgements.

Witnesses are brought in to testify against Jesus, but their accusations contradict each other. A couple of people are eventually found who come close to telling the truth about something Jesus said. We read in John's gospel:

Jesus answered and said unto them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

**John 2:19**

We know what Jesus meant. When they destroyed the temple that was his body, he would raise it up again in his resurrection.

Even when he has the opportunity to clarify his meaning and undermine their witness statements, he remains silent. We're led to think back to a certain prophecy in Isaiah:

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

**Isaiah 53:7**

Jesus has decided when he'll speak. And when he does, it won't be to protest his innocence. The high priest asks him a very direct question: *Are you the Christ, the son of God?* The time has come for Jesus to respond. And his response is not to admit any guilt but to give a full and clear answer to the high priest's question.

He responds, "I am". We shouldn't be too hasty in assuming Jesus is claiming God's name for himself. For example, whenever he said, "I am *hungry*", it's obviously to be understood in the usual sense. Still, there's at least the possibility he intends them to understand he's claiming the name of God for himself.

But the real gift to the Jews was what Jesus says next. He uses the title "Son of man" taken from the Hebrew Scriptures; claims he'll soon be sat at the right hand of God; and talks about coming in judgement in the clouds of God's glory and vengeance.

They have him now. The high priest, according to tradition, tears his own shirt in two. There's no excuse for us to doubt the significance of Jesus's claim. He IS claiming to be God. They haven't misunderstood. According to the judgement of every one of these knowledgeable men, the claim of Jesus has met and exceeded the threshold for a blasphemy prosecution. Every one of them declares him guilty and deserving of death.

The proceedings descend into a cruel show. Based on a faulty understanding of Scripture, they employed their test for a true prophet. They put a hood over his head, hit him in the face, and ask him to identify who did it. It sounds to me like using the Scriptures themselves as justification for this behaviour aggravates their crime. I'm sure it offends God more than if all this were an act of plain thuggery.

Ironically, at the very time they were employing their outrageous test, one of his prophecies was being fulfilled! Downstairs in the courtyard, Peter is enduring his own trial. A couple of people recognise him as a follower of Jesus, but he denies it. The cockerel does indeed crow twice to mark the time by which Judas had disowned Jesus three times, and it devastates him.

What I intend to do today is look a little more closely at the statement Jesus made. Hopefully, in spending some time on these important claims, we'll appreciate again the magnificence of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in doing this we honour him.

## Son of man

We first come across this title in the Old Testament. It isn't used exclusively for Christ either. The majority of its usage in the Bible is found to be in addressing Ezekiel the prophet. But some of its usage is about the Messiah, so we need to be cautious when we come across the term.

It says something quite remarkable about Jesus that he was willing to use this term for himself so enthusiastically. It shows just how far he went in identifying with us.

But let's think about the use of the term by Jesus himself. These examples are all from Mark's gospel:

- **THE SON OF MAN IS LORD OF SABBATHS.** You don't question Jesus about his behaviour on the Sabbath Day as the Jewish leaders did. *He created the whole concept of sabbaths!* They were eventually codified in the Law of Moses, but they were for man's own good. And for all their other benefits, **their primary purpose from the very beginning was to foreshadow the rest to be found in our union with Jesus Christ.** As the one who made Sabbaths, and the one who was symbolised in them, Jesus had all authority to declare what they were about—no one else. The Son of man gets to define what the sabbaths are about.
- **THE SON OF MAN HAS AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE SINS.** He is God, and he took on human form. And it's in this state of humanity and divinity he went to the cross to pay for the sins of his elect people. This means that everyone who goes to God in prayer and surrenders to him can now receive the forgiveness Jesus earned when he suffered at his father's hand. And this is why we pray for friends and family, isn't it? We just want them to surrender. We want them to stop throwing their lives away one distraction at a time. We want them to stop messing about and go to God now, because the day is coming when they will not be able to repent even if they want to.
- **THE SON OF MAN IS A SERVANT.** He declares without any shame that he came to this earth not to receive the adoration and worship of men but that *he himself would serve mankind.* Your first thought when hearing of God coming in the flesh wouldn't be that he would announce himself to be a servant! But he gave raw examples of how serious he was, such as when he got down on the floor and washed the feet of one of his disciples. No wonder Peter felt uncomfortable! Wouldn't you?
- **THE SON OF MAN WAS DESTINED FOR DEATH AND RESURRECTION.** This would be the grandest expression of his servant role. This would involve far more sacrifice, submission and humility than the mere washing of someone's feet. Jesus handed himself over to be beaten up, tortured, verbally abused, stripped naked, and nailed to a tree. And it's at that point the real suffering began, when he got to experience three hours being stripped of any consolation from God. The saviour even shouted out how he felt: he said he'd been **abandoned** by his father. But thanks be to God it did come to an end.

Jesus's expressions of despair turned to an expression of accomplishment. *It's done*, he said. He died. But within just a few days, he rose from the dead and thereby showed his followers what they too would one day experience.

- **THE SON OF MAN IS TO BE THE JUDGE OF ALL MANKIND.** There couldn't be a greater contrast between the Messiah in these scenes today and him as judge over the whole world. Presently, we see people spitting in his face. Then, mankind will see Jesus Christ in a new light. Whatever naïve views of Jesus they've had will be gone. Undoubtedly, they'll get the biggest shock of their existence when they see him in his role as the avenger of sin. If they believed in his existence at all, they'll have viewed him as a mild-mannered teacher of good morality. Then, they'll see him have hundreds of millions of souls consigned to the outer darkness. Listener: if you're not in the camp of Jesus Christ today, we pray you will take this as a strong warning. Stop what you're doing. Find somewhere quiet, get on your knees and plead with God for mercy.

The Son of man. It identifies Jesus with mankind in a very real way. But as *the* son of man, he is unique. He's a man, but more than that. He is **saviour** to some; and he's a **judge** to others.

## Right hand of power

Although the religious elite were angered by Jesus's claimed to be the Messiah, this in itself didn't fully constitute blasphemy. **The reason they unanimously decided Jesus was worthy of death was his claim to be God.**

Note Jesus didn't say he was God specifically. It was implied in what he said. Consider that reference in the Psalms we looked at a few weeks ago:

The LORD said unto my Lord, "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

**Psalm 110:1**

Sitting at the right hand of God meant equality *with* God. Jesus was claiming not only that he was the Son of man but also the Son of God. I say again: the reason the Sanhedrin were able to come to a quick decision, with one accord, is that Jesus's words constituted a claim to be God.

You may recall Stephen in the book of Acts receiving a vision shortly before he was killed:

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God!"

**Acts 7:55–56**

His description parallels what Jesus says here, and once again there was no mistaking what Stephen meant. He was describing seeing Christ at God's right hand, making Jesus equal with God, which is why the crowd immediately killed Stephen.

Whether the image is of Jesus on a throne God right hand side, or him sitting on the same throne as God, it all amounts to the same symbol: **equality of glory and authority**.

When we looked at the promises made to believers in the early part of the book of Revelation, there was this one which also mentions thrones:

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne.

**Revelation 3:21**

I described this overcoming as something which happens at conversion, something which happens during the Christian life, and something that reaches its culmination at the resurrection. This means that, just as we're said by Paul to be seated *right now* in heaven, so we are currently ruling with Christ.

We don't make decisions in the rule of this world, of course. We're ruling in the sense that we're united to Jesus Christ and have therefore become part of the ruling monarchy of God. Just as we died and rose again with Jesus, so we've been exalted with him and will even take part in judgement with him.

## Clouds of heaven

We examined this term a few weeks ago. Let's remind ourselves about some of that. We read an example of the usage of this term in Jeremiah:

Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind. His horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us, for we are spoiled!

**Jeremiah 4:13**

When we went through ch.13, you may remember we examined what the clouds of heaven represented. Clouds are used in a wide range of imagery in the Bible, both positively and negatively. But in ch.13, it was about a coming judgement, and clouds used in this context do indeed speak about the glory and the fearfulness of God.

In that chapter, Jesus was deliberately making reference to the prophecy in Daniel. Let's have a read of it again:

I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

**Daniel 7:13**

And that verse helps us understand what Jesus meant when he said he would come "in the clouds". The people weren't being told to look up in the sky and expect to see a small figure being transported on a cloud. Jesus never has and never will use clouds as a form of transportation. It's figurative, and any mature Bible student can see that.

A similar reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 can be seen in Matthew's gospel:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

**Matthew 24:30**

So this passage today involves Jesus repeating his declaration of judgement on Jerusalem he spoke about in his speech on the Mount of Olives that time. In his book on the gospel of Mark, Kernaghan says the following:

The exaltation of the Son of Man in heaven would be an event that the chief priests, elders and scribes could not actually see because it would take place before the throne of God. The exaltation of the Son of Man, however, would also mean the destruction of the temple. In its destruction they would see the vindication of the Son of Man.

If the members of the Sanhedrin were theologically aware enough, they'd understand the symbolism. What they'd experience on earth wouldn't be visions up in the sky but the terrible thunder of the approaching armies of Imperial Rome who would soon obliterate Jerusalem.

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This preliminary hearing was certainly irregular. But the bigger wonder is why Jesus's accusers didn't pause for a moment to consider whether his claims were true. They'd already decided he was a nobody, so any claim of divinity equalled an act of blasphemy in their eyes. It's astounding to think the only truly innocent person in that room was declared guilty by everyone else!

The scenes down in the courtyard play out like a parallel trial, this one involving Peter. His confrontation increased in its hostility. Those servants or soldiers also came to a conclusion about the one they were accusing.

So we have this great contrast whereby Jesus didn't make a justified defence against the lying witnesses, whereas Judas made a *vehement* defence against *truthful* witnesses.

Peter was devastated at his own failure. But it presents a challenge for each one of us. To follow Jesus Christ properly is a costly business. Certainly, the cost will vary according to the place and time in which God has placed us. But even in our relatively free society, we're to consecrate our entire selves to God, and if we do that, we'll find ourselves having to make sacrifices in many areas of our life.

Peter's devotion at this moment didn't amount to much. He preferred a place of safe observation. And friends: we need to make sure WE are not standing on the side-lines observing the battle; we need to place ourselves right in the middle of it.

You've maybe noticed I haven't mentioned this mysterious figure that pops up in v.50. We can only guess who this man was. But we can certainly use his anonymity to challenge ourselves about our courage or lack of it in the battle. The scene is reminiscent of a

prophecy in the second chapter of Amos, where someone thought to be courageous would run away. And they'd even endure the shame of nakedness to save their own hide.

Our warfare should be marked by serpent-like wisdom, dove-like harmlessness, and lion-like bravery. Find your courage, brethren. Speak out on issues, even at the risk of ridicule. Tell people about Jesus Christ, even if you might get laughed at.

There's also encouragement here for you, though. If you suffer at the world's hands and are treated unfairly, learn from Jesus. He endured the false trials and didn't descend into sinful retaliation. He knew his mission, and no amount of suffering could take away from his eventual reward.

Our Lord has given us a great example of behaviour. We've seen him praying, conforming his will to God's, not resisting arrest, showing dignity even when being maltreated and having this driven attitude to finishing the course he was set on. Look to him! Keep looking to him! And pray that, in every way you're supposed to, you'll be made like him.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

**Hebrews 12:2**

Amen