

“The Ecclesiastical Trial of Jesus”
Mark 14:53-65
(Preached at Trinity, May 13, 2015)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Tonight we come to the trial of our Lord before Caiaphas and the scribes and elders – most likely a meeting of the Sanhedrin. It was a sham from the beginning. Upon the arrest of Jesus **Verse 53** tells us they led Him away to the high priest who was Caiaphas. Caiaphas was a cunning, ruthless, manipulator. He had no problem with the shedding of innocent blood. He had planned for this moment but had no idea that it would occur so quickly. **See Verses 1-2.** His wildest dreams were coming true and he wasn't about to let the opportunity to rid himself of Jesus pass away.
2. In **Verse 54** we are reminded that Peter was following. He entered the palace of the high priest and sat with the servants to see what was going to happen.
3. To understand this passage and that which is to follow in **Chapter 15** it is necessary to bear in mind that Jesus actually had to undergo two trials. The first was an ecclesiastical trial, the second was a civil trial. Each trial contained three stages.

The three stages of the ecclesiastical trial.

- (1) The preliminary hearing before Annas
John 18:12-14 NAU - "So the *Roman* cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, ¹³ and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. ¹⁴ Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people."
- (2) The second stage involved the trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin – **V. 53.** The Sanhedrin was the supreme court of the Jews. It was comprised of 71 members. For a trial such as this a quorum was 23
- (3) The third stage involved the trial before this same body just after daybreak
Mark 15:1 NAU - " Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate."

The three stages of the civil trial

- (1) The trial before Pilate
 - (2) The trial before Herod
 - (3) The return to Pilate
4. The hearing before Annas is recorded only in the Gospel of John
The appearance before Herod is recorded only in Luke.
 5. In our passage tonight it is assumed that the appearance before Annas has already occurred.

6. There was no intention of giving Jesus a fair hearing according to Jewish laws of evidence in order to discover His true guilt or innocence. Rather, the intention was to find Him guilty by any means.
7. His trial was illegal on several technical grounds
 - A. No trial involving a person's life was allowed at night. Yet Jesus was tried and condemned between the hours of 1-3 A.M. In addition no hearings involving capital punishment could occur on the day of one of the great feasts
 - B. The arrest of Jesus was effected as the result of a bribe.
 - C. No person on trial could be asked a question that would incriminate him. The interesting question here is how the high priest knew how to formulate the question. Jesus had repeatedly told His disciples not to reveal who He was.
 - D. In cases of capital punishment Jewish law did not permit the sentence to be pronounced until the day after the accused had been convicted.
 - E. Witnesses were to be examined separately with no contact with each other. The penalty for a false witness was death.
 - F. In the court proceedings all evidence for the innocence of the accused had to be presented before the evidence for his guilt was presented.
8. In essence, it was no trial at all – it was murder. But they were careful to try to make it appear like a legal trial. They had sought men to witness against Jesus. The problem was that no two agreed.
Mark 14:55-56 NAU - "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. ⁵⁶ For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent."
9. Finally some came forward and accused Jesus of being a defamer of the Temple.
Mark 14:57-58 NAU - "Some stood up and *began* to give false testimony against Him, saying, ⁵⁸ "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'"
 - A. They misquoted Christ. Jesus actually said,
John 2:19 – “. . .Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”
 - B. To this the high priest stood up, pretending outrage to their witness, demands that Jesus testify of Himself. – **Verse 60**
 - C. Jesus answered nothing
Verse 61 – "But He kept silent and did not answer."
 - D. The high priest cries out,
Mark 14:61 NAU - "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed *One*?"
 - E. Jesus could have simply answered, “No,” by which the trial would have ended. But His answer was “Yes” or more specifically, Ἐγώ εἰμι
10. Jesus' answer throws them into a frenzy
 - A. **Verse 63** - The high priest tears his clothes and cries,
Mark 14:64 NAU - "You have heard the blasphemy"
 - B. **Verse 64** – The Sanhedrin condemned Him, "And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death."
 The verdict may not have been unanimous
 Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea may have been there and others might have dissented

Luke 23:50-51 NAU - "And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man ⁵¹ (he had not consented to their plan and action), *a man* from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God;"

- C. **Verse 62** - Then they begin to spit on Him and strike Him in the face while mocking
11. Tonight I want to direct your attention primarily to our Lord's statement in **Verse 64**. Jesus makes very few statements during the entire ordeal of His crucifixion. Each word was carefully chosen. Each statement speaks mountains of truth.
- I. First Jesus gives a positive affirmation of His deity
⁶² And Jesus said, "I am;" - Ἐγώ εἰμι
- A. Jesus answered by using the name that applies to God alone = LORD
1. It is the most frequent designation for God in Scripture occurring more than 5000 times.
 2. It was the name that God revealed to Moses through the burning bush – I AM THAT I AM – God is "The Existing One"
 3. In the Hebrew the tense is not definite
God has no past, present, or future – God is the One that always is.
 4. All that pertains to God pertains to Christ. Jesus is the revelation of God to man
 5. This is consistent with the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John
John 8:58 – "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."
- B. Jesus was indeed the Christ
1. The anointed one, the Messiah
 2. He was the one predicted by the prophets who would be Israel's deliverer
- C. Jesus was indeed the Son of God
1. He was the Eternal Word
John 1:1-2 KJV – "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."
John 1:14 KJV – "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."
 2. Jesus Christ was fully and completely God
 3. Previously Jesus had seldom openly declared Himself to be the Christ – now He makes it clear
- II. **Mark 14:62 NAU** - "and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER"
- A. Jesus adds these words because of His current situation that made His claim appear highly unlikely
1. Imagine the Son of God bound and taken prisoner
 2. He must have appeared most frail and powerless
 3. In essence Jesus is telling them, "Nevertheless, you will surely see Me as I Am"

- B. First Jesus points to His true position –
1. He was seated at the right hand – the place of honor
 2. He was seated at the right hand of “The” Power
 3. It signified that all power and authority belonged to God and that all power was at His disposal
Matthew 28:18 NAU - "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."
Romans 1:3-4 NAU - "concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, ⁴ who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,"
- C. Jesus had the power to call all of heaven to His defense
Matthew 26:53 NAU - "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"
- D. He had the power to fulfil every word that He had spoken
Matthew 24:35 NAU - "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."
Luke 4:32 NAU - "and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority."
- E. Jesus had the power to lay down His life in order to deliver His people from their sins
John 10:17-18 NAU - "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. ¹⁸ "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."
- F. He had the power to establish His Mediatorial Kingdom in which He would sit in dominion as the King of His people
Mark 9:1 NAU - "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."
- III. "and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."
- A. Jesus is referring to Daniel’s prophecy
Daniel 7:13-14 NAU - "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. ¹⁴ "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."
- B. The Jewish nation would see God’s judgment in just a few years. This of course was not the ultimate judgment.
Matthew 23:38 – “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”
Mark 13:2 NAU - "And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down."

- C. The whole world will witness Jesus coming with great power and judgment to judge the living and the dead
Revelation 1:7 NAU - "BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen."
1. These words are spoken as a great comfort for God's people
1 Thessalonians 4:16-5:1 NAU - "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words. "
 2. But the same words spoken for our comfort are spoken to their terror

Conclusion:

1. The problem with most people is they cannot see beyond Jesus as the suffering Servant.
 They can't see beyond baby Jesus in the manger
 They can't see beyond Jesus in His frail humanity
2. We must see Jesus upon the throne. He has all power. He rules all things with absolute dominion. He will judge all men according to their actions.
3. Our duty is to love Him.
Psalm 2:12 – "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him."
4. Our duty is to bow down and serve Him as our King
 The Jews cried out
John 19:15-16 NAU - "So they cried out, "Away with *Him*, away with *Him*, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." ¹⁶ So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified."
 - a. Most men cry out, "Away with Him, I have no king but myself." "I have no god but my possessions."
 - b. May God grant us the wisdom to see Jesus high and lifted up.