

Theme: Facing a hostile mockery of a trial, Jesus stands resolute and fearless, declaring His Divine identity as the Messiah, Son of God, Suffering Servant, and Son of Man

I. Intro - My Experience on A Court Martial

- A. Summer 1987 - assigned to a court martial in Augusta
- B. 'The Corps wouldn't charge him if he wasn't guilty!'
- C. I ended up acquitting him - charges were trumped up!
- D. Today we see a crooked jury reach a terrible verdict

II. Jesus Brought Before the Sanhedrin

- A. Jesus is brought before the High Priest
They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together. Mark 14:53

- 1. The High Priest is Caiaphas
 - a. His name is given in John 18:13-14
 - b. He is the son-in-law of Annas a former High Priest
 - c. He served from AD18-36/37 - a very long tenure
 - d. He was more a political figure than a spiritual shepherd

- 2. This is the beginning of the corrupt trial

- B. The Sanhedrin gathers to try Jesus
They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together. Mark 14:53

- 1. The Sanhedrin was comprised of leading priests, elders, and scribes, and was presided over by the High Priest (Josephus)

- 2. The number was 70 plus the High Priest, and tradition said this was modeled on Moses plus the 70 elders of Israel
- 3. The priest and elders were predominately Sadducees, while the scribes were predominately Pharisees
- 4. The procedures for capital crimes (according to the Mishnah, which was written about 170 after this time, but probably reflects practices at this time too.)
 - a. There were a total of 70 members plus the High Priest who presided, but a quorum of only 23 was required for death penalty cases.
 - b. The court was to meet in public at the Temple
 - c. The court was to meet during the daytime and not on the day before a Sabbath or festival.
 - d. The court had to follow strict procedures to make sure at least two witnesses totally agreed in order to reach a guilty verdict.
- 5. As you can see, the Sanhedrin did NOT follow its own procedure in the trial of Jesus, because they already knew the verdict they wanted and would not allow anything to stand in the way!

III. Jesus On Trial Before the Sanhedrin

- A. The Sanhedrin looks for evidence of a capital crime
The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. ⁵⁶ Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. Mark 14:55-56
- 1. They want evidence of a capital crime so they can have Jesus put to death.

2. Amazingly they have witnesses ready to testify in the middle of the night!
3. They had trouble finding witnesses for this
4. This required two witnesses
On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.
Deuteronomy 17:6
 - a. They had to have at least 2 witnesses of the crime
 - b. The witnesses were interviewed separately and had to agree on all the details
5. Their problem was the false witnesses did not agree
Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. Mark 14:56
 - a. They don't have true witnesses, so they get false ones to make up stories
 - b. "O what a tangled web we weave when at first we practice to deceive" - Sir Walter Scott *Marmion*
 - c. The kangaroo court is having problems convicting the Innocent Son of God!

B. Round two: accusation of Jesus destroying the Temple

Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: ⁵⁸ "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.'" ⁵⁹ Yet even then their testimony did not agree. Mark 14:57-59

1. A new tack - but still false accusations
2. They falsely claim Jesus said "I will destroy the Temple"

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."... ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. John 2:19, 21

- a. Jesus did NOT say He would destroy the Temple
 - b. He was referring to His Body - which they were trying to destroy at that moment!
3. Ironically, it is their rejection of Jesus that will lead to the destruction of the Temple!
 4. Again, their testimony did not agree and was invalid!
Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: ⁵⁸ "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.'" ⁵⁹ Yet even then their testimony did not agree. Mark 14:57-59

C. Round three: The Silence of Jesus

Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" ⁶¹ But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Mark 14:60-61

1. You can sense the High Priest's frustration at their lack of progress, so he tries to get Jesus to speak.
2. He is hoping Jesus will incriminate Himself, but Jesus is silent.
3. This is more than a legal tactic - Jesus is fulfilling the prophecies about the Suffering Servant
He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. Isaiah 53:7
 - a. Jesus is fulfilling this prophecy in their sight!

- b. He is showing them He is the Suffering Servant sent to save the people of God from their sin!

D. Round four: Jesus proclaims His Divine Identity

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" Mark 14:61

1. The High Priest directly asks Jesus if He is the Messiah and the Son of God.
2. Many Jews did not think of the Messiah as Divine, but some were thinking in those terms. The High Priest's question may include this idea.
3. The reader knows Jesus is the Son of God
The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark 1:1
And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Mark 1:11 (also 9:7 the transfiguration)

Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." Mark 3:11 (also Mark 5:7; 1:24)
4. But Jesus has never directly said this in public
5. Jesus directly affirms that this is true: "I am"
"I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." Mark 14:62
6. Jesus then adds even more - I am the Son of Man from Daniel 7 and the Messiah from Psalm 110:1 - I will be seated at the right hand of the Father, and I will ride the clouds of judgment!
7. Facing this hostile mockery of a trial, Jesus stands resolute and fearless, declaring His Divine identity as the Messiah, Son of God, Suffering Servant, and Son of Man.

8. Standing before this wicked jury facing judgment, Jesus boldly declares that He will be seated on the throne of God; one day they will stand before Him!

E. The verdict: Death!

The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. ⁶⁴ "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death. ⁶⁵ Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him. Mark 14:63-65

1. The High Priest tears his clothes as a testimony of his horror at what he considers blasphemy.
2. The Sanhedrin condemns Jesus as worthy of death for blaspheming (Leviticus 24:16)
3. Jesus had already prophesied the outcome of this trial long beforehand!
"We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles Mark 10:33
4. They blindfold, mock, abuse, and beat Him, asking Him to prove His claim by stating who hit him (based on a silly reading of Isaiah 11:2-3)
5. Ironically they are fulfilling prophecy in these actions
I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Isaiah 50:6
6. Thus this kangaroo court is unwittingly fulfilling Jesus' prophecy and the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Suffering Servant. They act wickedly, but God is accomplishing His will to save His people!

IV. Applying the Word

A. When we place God in the dock

1. The absurdity and injustice of this trial

The Sanhedrin stands on the law and Jesus sits in the dock, but in reality the Sanhedrin breaks the law and Jesus upholds it. The testimony that the Sanhedrin seeks against Jesus is in the end not provided by the false witnesses but by Jesus himself in the claim to be God's Son. Jesus stands on trial before the Sanhedrin, but the Sanhedrin will stand trial before the Son of Man when he returns in glory. The Sanhedrin makes a charade of Jesus' ability to prophesy, but his prophecies all come true. Above all, it is the high priest, not Jesus, who blasphemes, because Jesus is God's Son. (James R. Edwards)

- a. This whole trial is absurd and unjust!
- b. To "protect" God's Law, they violate God's Law; to "honor" God they reject and abuse Him!
- c. But this is the way of fallen humanity - to justify ourselves, we embrace absurdity and injustice!
- d. In this season of Lent - do I confess my sin or go to absurd lengths to justify it, even rejecting God and His truth?

2. Jesus was condemned for Who He is!

- a. This is the ultimate absurdity and injustice!
- b. None of the charges stick because they are all false!
- c. Jesus is rejected and put to death, not for any sin, but for Who He is!
- d. Our age does the same thing! We will accept Jesus as a good man, a moral teacher, an inspiring example, but not for Who He is: God in the flesh Who died for us, rose from the dead, and one day will return to judge each of us!

e. There is an increasing movement of people saying they like the morality of Christianity, but not accepting Who Jesus is! This too is absurd!

f. Do I embrace Jesus as God in the flesh?

3. Our desire to place God in the dock

- a. This is the temptation since the Fall - to justify ourselves by accusing God!
- b. Some even say on judgment day they have questions and accusations to hurl at God!
- c. But on that Day, all our absurdity and injustice will be obvious, and every tongue will be silenced before Jesus Christ, as all acknowledge Him as Lord of all!
- d. Let us live in light of that Day!

B. The Table: In my place condemned He stood

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
in my place condemned he stood

1. Here we remember it should have been me!
2. Jesus humbly took my place to set me free!
3. Come, remember, and give thanks!

Jesus On Trial - The Sanhedrin

Mark 14:53-65

March 9, 2025

Communion

Revelation 1:4-6

Teaching keywords: Christology; testing and trial; Deity of Christ; Prophecy (Old Testament)

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from His Spirit before his throne,⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth, Who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to Whom be glory and power for ever and ever - may He fill you with every covenant blessing! Amen. Rev 1:4-6

They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together.⁵⁴ Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.⁵⁵ The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any.⁵⁶ Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

⁵⁷ Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: ⁵⁸ “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.’” ⁵⁹ Yet even then their testimony did not agree. ⁶⁰ Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” ⁶¹ But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”

⁶² “I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” ⁶³ The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. ⁶⁴ “You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” They all condemned him as worthy of death. ⁶⁵ Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, “Prophecy!” And the guards took him and beat him. Mark 14:53-65