

The Lord's Trial

Mark 14:53-65

Mark 14:53-65 – *“And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. ⁵⁴ But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.*

⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. ⁵⁶ For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree. ⁵⁷ Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, ⁵⁸ “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.’” ⁵⁹ But not even then did their testimony agree. ⁶⁰ And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, “Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?”

⁶¹ But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” ⁶² Jesus said, “I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

⁶³ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? ⁶⁴ You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?” And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. ⁶⁵ Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, “Prophecy!” And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.”

Background Notes

There were two stages to our Lord's trial, leading up to His crucifixion. The first stage of His trial was before the religious authorities, and that's what we have here. Then He was tried before the political authorities, Pilate and Herod. The reason for the two stages was that the Jewish authorities did not have the power to enforce the death penalty.

Verse 53 says that *“they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with Him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes.”* They brought Him before the Sanhedrin, or the “council” (v55). The Sanhedrin was the governing body of the Jews, consisting of priests, elders and scribes. The high priest - in this case, Caiaphas - presided over the council. The purpose for this unusual night session of the Sanhedrin was to find a legitimate cause to take the Lord to the Roman authorities the next day and ask for the death penalty. But even the false witnesses could not agree in their false testimonies, and according to the Law there had to be at least two witnesses who agreed. Finally some false witnesses came forward and misquoted the Lord's statement about the Temple. John 2:19 tells us what the real quote was, and that the Lord meant the “temple of His body.”

Up to this time the Lord had remained completely silent, but when Caiaphas specifically asked Him if He was the Son of God, He answered, *“I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven”* (v62).

At this point the high priest was convinced that they had accomplished their mission. As far as they were concerned, the Lord had blasphemed God. Even though they would have to trump up some further false charges against the Lord, they could now proceed to the Roman authorities at daybreak and ask for the death penalty. Before their next move, however, they began to humiliate and abuse the Lord: *“Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, “Prophecy!” And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands”* (v65). And it was not just the guards or the Temple police who abused Him - even members of the Sanhedrin were involved! What shameful treatment of their Messiah - the Lord Jesus Christ!

Doctrinal Points

1. Jesus predicted His resurrection.

In John 2:19 and 21 the Lord said, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,”* and *“He was speaking of the temple of His body.”* Even though the false witnesses garbled the Lord’s actual statement, the fact that they said He said those words is definite evidence that the Lord made this statement. In other words, the Lord predicted His resurrection! In fact, the Lord predicted His resurrection on several occasions, publicly.

These predictions are, of course, evidence of our Lord’s omniscience – that He knows everything. Although our Lord was fully Man, yet He was also fully God. When our Lord became Man, He never gave up His attributes of deity, including omniscience. He knew everything. Now it’s true that, at certain times, the Lord voluntarily gave up the full **use** of His attributes for Himself, but the Gospels frequently give us evidence of His use of His divine attributes. In John 2:19 we definitely see our Lord’s omniscience when He predicted His resurrection.

A little “apologetics” here. “Apologetics” means defending the faith, and we should be able to do that. Even skeptics of the Bible cannot escape the evidence that Jesus Christ predicted His resurrection. The unbelieving skeptic will try to deny the evidence for the resurrection, and they try to deny that the Lord predicted His resurrection as well. Why? Because the predictions add to the overall evidence for the resurrection.

The unbelieving skeptic will generally say that the early Christians made up this prediction, and “put it into the mouth” of Jesus when they wrote the Gospels. But that “reconstruction of history” is inconceivable when you really think it through, because this statement was not just made privately to the Lord’s disciples. The Gospel record says that Jesus made the statement in public – it was a public statement that could easily have been refuted by unbelievers if the Lord hadn’t really said it. He publicly predicted His resurrection, and the record says the statement was so public that the Sanhedrin

brought it out and used it as evidence against Him. In fact, His prediction of His resurrection was so public that the passersby at the crucifixion said, wagging their heads, *“Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days...”* (Mark 15:29).

If indeed the Lord didn't really make that statement, the unbelieving critic would not only have to say that the early Christians made it up and put it into the mouth of Jesus - they would also have to reconstruct written history. The early Christians would have had to make up and pass off as true all of this record – and that's impossible! That's like saying General MacArthur never really said (publicly), “I shall return,” when he left the Philippines, but that the statement was actually manufactured by a small group of “MacArthur fans”! That's impossible! There's too much associated history that would have to be made up and passed off as the truth, and too many eyewitnesses who could easily have refuted this fable. I hope you followed that argument. That's apologetics! Jesus predicted His resurrection.

2. Jesus claimed to be God.

In verse 61, the high priest asked the Lord the direct question: *“Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”* The Lord then gave a straight answer: “I am.” It's hard to say for sure whether the Lord was using the divine title “I AM,” or just saying, “Yes, I am the Christ.” But certainly He was claiming, in no uncertain terms, to be the Messiah. The phrase “Son of Man” is a Messianic title from Daniel 7.

Claiming to be the Messiah was claiming to be God, and that's why the high priest tore his clothes at the Lord's statement. Even though many of the Jews at this time had faulty concepts about the full deity of the Messiah, the Old Testament leaves no doubt that the Messiah would be fully God. And of course there were other occasions where the Lord Jesus claimed to be God, in no uncertain terms. In both John 5:18 and John 10:31-33 Jesus claimed to be God.

A little more “apologetics” - defending the faith. The unbelieving skeptics of today don't have any problem accepting the fact that Jesus existed and that He was a “good man,” but they don't want to accept the fact that He claimed to be God. Follow this reasoning: If Jesus claimed to be God, He's got to be either more than just a “good man” - or not a good man at all. You can't get off the hook by saying Jesus was just a good man, because He claimed to be God. If the Lord Jesus claimed to be God, and the claim was false, He either lied, or He was deceived – and therefore He was not a good man. But if He did claim to be God, and the claim is true, then He's *more* than a good man—He's **God!** And He's the only way of salvation. And the critic must submit to that logical argument.

So the skeptics will try to say that Jesus did not claim to be God. They don't like to admit that, because it traps them in a dilemma. Logically, if the statement is true, they have to submit to the fact that Jesus is God. If the statement is false, they no longer can go with the idea that Jesus is just a good man, because if a good man claims to be God, and the claim is false, he's a liar, and certainly not a good man. So that line of logic is closed off to them. So they don't want to admit that Jesus claimed to be God - but the evidence cannot be denied!

The Jews would not pick up stones (John 10:31) if Jesus were just saying, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” The fact that the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Him (John 5:18) is clear evidence that Jesus claimed to be God! And it’s certain that the Jewish authorities did not crucify the Lord because He gave the Sermon on the Mount. No – they accused Him of blasphemy because He claimed to be God! The evidence is there. It cannot be denied. **Jesus claimed to be God.**

Practical Application

At whose fire are you warming yourself?

Peter was warming himself at the world’s fire, sitting with the officers of the Temple, the Temple guard, and the Temple police - the very people who were slapping, spitting upon and abusing the Lord! Peter warmed himself at the world’s fire, and then he proceeded to deny the Lord—something he never thought possible. After the resurrection, Peter warmed himself at the *Lord’s* fire, and his relationship with the Lord was restored (John 21). What a difference!

Here’s the question: At whose fire are *you* warming yourself? If you’re “warming yourself at the world’s fire” as Peter did, you may be a believer, but you’re unwilling to separate yourself from this world—the very world that continues to slap Christ in the face. I know several Christian businessmen who warm themselves at the Lord’s fire on Sunday morning, but during the rest of the week they warm themselves at the world’s fire. In fact, you’d never know they were Christians during the rest of the week. Their main goal in life is to be as successful and make as much money as possible. They laugh at questionable jokes, and they enjoy questionable activities that the world has to offer - things that do not honor Christ. In essence, during the week they’re denying that they know the Lord – just as Peter did.

Is it possible you’re in that category? At whose fire are you warming yourself?