# They All Condemned Jesus

Mark 14:51-65
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seized him, 52 but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked. 53And they led Jesus to the
high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. 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. 55 Now the chief priests and
the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found
none. 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. 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?"7 61 But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the
high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" 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." 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, "Prophesy!" And the guards received him with
blows.

What kind of a religion condemns an innocent man to death?
Answer: A hypocritical religion.

- A religion that exalts self over self-denial.
- A "lip-service" promoting religion.
- A religion that is obsessed with a display of outward piety than internal purity.
- A religion that entitles itself to grace while imposing rigid rules on others.
- A religion that elevates man-made tradition over God's commandments.

This is the religion that we see practiced by the chief priests, the scribes and the elders.
And it all comes to a climax when Jesus is betrayed and arrested.
Many claim that religion is man made. I know people like that. You may know people like that.
In a way they are right.

1. You could have all the best Bibles with you, have the best banner made with the Ten Commandments and have it put on the most visible, vantage place in in our home, you could put Bible verses on the walls of your home, put crosses around your neck, in your car, in your home, on clothing and yet be unfeeling and dead in your conscience.
2. The Jewish leaders of the first century Temple establishment were the most religious people of the time. Nothing was remotely pagan about them. Yet their hearts consumed with envy. Their religion was a sham and a façade to cover their greed, vice and hatred.

- Jesus said to the Pharisees and the elders when they asked him about the tradition of the elders. "*Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; [7] in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*.' *You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men*." Mark 7:6-8.
- When Jesus spoke to the Temple leaders in John 8, they claimed entitlement because of their ethnicity. And what Jesus tell them? "*I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you*." John 8:37. This is simply astonishing! These people had the heritage, the books, the Law, the Covenant and yet their desire is to kill Jesus.

There is a distinction between man-made religion and the religion of the Bible.

- Paul writes in Colossians 2 that legalism and asceticism can lead to what he calls "self-made religion" – "*These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh*." Colossians 2:23
- James, the brother of our Lord says in James 1:26 that "*If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless (empty or vain)*". A doctrine of talk and not doing is useless. Are your actions quieter than your words?

What is true religion then?
[27] *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world*. James 1:27

Pure religion is serving others while keeping yourself unstained.
This world is full of stains. If you desire to be unstained, without spot, without blemish the world is not going to help you.
This is why we gather together as a church Sunday after Sunday – to invest in your sanctification. True religion is deliberate action towards Christlikeness.

Last week you heard three exhortations from the previous passage – beware of *apostasy*, beware of fleshly *accomplishment*, and beware of *abandonment*.

Jesus answered one question from the high priest. That was it!
Only one question - “Are you the Christ?” Jesus says, “I am”.
And they all condemn him deserving death.

The question that Jesus answers is central and foundational to your life as a Christian.
If what Jesus says is true, which it is, then your faith, your life and your eternity depends on this truth.
Let’s begin with the surrounding verses before we get to the question Jesus answers.

Verses 51 through 52.
51 And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.

Here we have this little odd detail about a young man followed Jesus. Who is this man? Some say it was Mark the Gospel writer. Others suggest many names. We don’t really know. What we know is that the guards try to grab him as well. But he slips away and runs as fast as he can. As he run away, he has nothing remaining on his body. That’s all we know.

Verses 53 through 59 describe to us the motive and the attempt to condemn Jesus.
Exhortation#1: Beware of crowdsourcing half-truths

53 And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. 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. 55 Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. 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.

Jesus had been just betrayed. All the disciples have abandoned except for Peter who appears to have mustered up come courage. Verse 54 tells us that Peter followed Jesus from a distance. And went into the courtyard of the high priest. There it says Peter sat down with the guards. Not the best translation. The word used for *guard* is actually an under-rower: someone assigned in the bottom part of a ship to row. It could just mean attendant or servant. Peter just ran away from the guards. It’s unlikely he would be sitting down the guards particularly with one whose ear was slashed.

John's gospel tells us that the high priest was Caiaphas. The high priest was the top official of the Temple complex. He had authority over 70 chief priests who had reported to him. Commentators note that the high priestly office had become more of a political office than a spiritual and religious one. High priests were put up and sacked at the whim of the political ruler.

And the council members gather together. This is the moment the whole temple establishment had been waiting for. They wanted to arrest him earlier. They even conspired with the Herodians to kill him but Jesus had been eluding them. Their hearts were must have been so filled with such evil satisfaction that they must have surely said in their hearts, 'We got him'. And now they have to prove that Jesus is worthy of death. Notice, they don't seek just an arrest or punishment for Jesus. They seek capital punishment! Death. Surely, the religious leaders knew that to put someone to death, they would need multiple witnesses to agree for their accusation to be established as credible.

So, what do they do? They bring up false witnesses to establish false charges. But no one agrees. One of the false witnesses says (in verse 58) "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands". Did Jesus say that? No. This is not recorded in the Gospel of Mark but in the Gospel of John, Jesus said something similar, "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*." John 2:19. The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. John 2:20-21

So, the false witnesses fail to agree and the high priest has had enough of this charade.
So what does he do?

Verses 60 through 61.

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?"[7] 61 But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

This is an unusual question from the high priest. Jesus kept his identity rather private.

1. When the unclean spirits recognized Jesus' identity that he was the Son of God, the told them not to make him known (Mark 1:34, 3:12).
2. After Jesus healed a mute man, he told him not to make him known (Mark 7:36).
3. Privately, however, Jesus did ask his disciples who he was. And Peter said it out loud, "You are the *Christ*!" Mark 8:29. And Jesus affirms what Peter said.
4. In Mark 9:41, Jesus mentions the Christ this way – "*For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward"*

5. When Jesus taught in the Temple, he does ask what the scribes about say the Christ – "*How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? [36] David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, "'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet*."' Mark 12:35-36. There was an expectation about a Messiah from the line of David in the first century. So gives a hint in this teaching.
6. And finally in Mark 13, in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus his disciples about false Christs – "*And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it*." Mark 13:21

The high priest asks other questions but Jesus is silent. Jesus doesn't need to answer any of them. But to this one question, Jesus will give an answer: The question is: Are you the Christ, The Son of the Blessed? "Blessed" means God.

What was Jesus' answer?

Verse 62.

[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*."

Jesus gives a three-part answer:

1. Notice Jesus simply says "I AM". This is language of the Tetragrammaton. Exodus chapter 3, verse 14 is the flagship verse for who God is - I am that I am. What are implications of Jesus's answer? Jesus goes backwards into time and forward into the future. Jesus claims he is the Eternal Son of God by his I AM statement.
2. Secondly, Jesus uses language from the Old Testament, that the high priest must have been very familiar with. 2 Samuel 7:14, Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 2:7 attest to his Sonship.
3. Thirdly, Jesus claims he will return as Judge and Savior one day. Jesus claims he will return as the Judge of the world and as Savior of those who have been saved by him.

Exhortation#2: Beware of opposing Christ to preserve self.

What does the high priest do when he hears Jesus respond?

Verse 63 through 65.

[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, "Prophesy!" And the guards received him with blows.

Jesus' answer was quite outrageous in the ears of the high priest. The high priest tears his garments this making an official pronouncement that Jesus has committed the sin of blasphemy. Blasphemy was a sin worthy of death by stoning not crucifixion. "*Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death*" (Leviticus 24:16).

The high priest asks for affirmation from the council. And they all condemned Jesus to death. Then they spit on him. They strike him. They beat him. They mock him.

What should we make of this pronouncement?
One commentator asks a very good question, "*Is Jesus a blasphemer or is Caiaphas the blasphemer?*" Both statements can't be true at the same time. Either Jesus is a blasphemer or not.
Answer: 1 John 2:22 - Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

- The high priest is religious and yet an unbeliever. Caiaphas is a liar, a blasphemer and an accomplice to murder.
- The chief priests, the scribes and the scribes are unbelievers sold to evil. Their father is not God but the devil. John 8:44. Even pagan Pilate could see why they wanted to kill Jesus – out of envy.

This is the problem with unbelief. You can have all the religion and still be blind to Jesus' identity. Why? The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them seeing the Gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. 2 Corinthians 4:4.

No one can know who Jesus is unless Jesus himself reveals it. Becoming a Christian is a supernatural miracle!
"*All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him*." (Luke 10:22)

When you get to Mark chapter 15, you see that these leaders had accomplished their plan to crucify Jesus. And they stand at the site of crucifixion and begin mocking Jesus.

So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him*"* Mark 15:31-32

You think they would have believed if Jesus came down from the cross? No! They will not believe.
You see these chief priests and scribes kept mocking until they saw Jesus die on that cross. Their hearts were sold to unbelief. A man cannot receive on thing unless it is given from heaven. Only Christ can soften the hardened heart.
Jesus told Thomas, "*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*." John 20:29

How do you know Jesus is the Christ? It is incredibly simple!
By believing. Believing not denying that Jesus is the Christ.

1. John writes at the end of his Gospel "these are written so that you may *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by *believing* you may have *life* in his name. (John 20:31)
2. Everyone who *believes* that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. (1 John 5:1)
3. Whoever *confesses* that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 1John 4:15
4. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 1 John 5:20

Jesus came into this world to become like a stain by taking on our stains. Those who believe in Jesus the Christ have the greatest joy – the forgiveness of their sin and life.

MESSAGE SUMMARY: They all condemned Jesus! Mark 14:51-65

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What should we understand by Jesus' response to the question "Are you the Christ?" Why is this significant? What does Jesus reveal about his identity in his answer to the high priest?

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. Do you believe Jesus is the Christ? Why? What are implications in believing that Jesus is the Christ? Luke 24:46-47, John 20:31, Romans 9:5, 1 John 5:1,

3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: What will you to do to love, serve and share Christ with others? Romans 14:18, 1 Peter 3:15