**JESUS TRIED IN OUR PLACE**

***Mark 14:53-15:15***

***“‘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.’” (v. 14:62)***

In the previous passage, Jesus prayed at Gethsemane, He prayed until he submitted to the will of God. It was this moment of prayer that led to the victory over Satan. Because of Jesus’ prayer, Jesus could face his accusers and be ready for the final verdict: death! Through this passage, let’s think about who Jesus is and why he was tried and condemned. May the Spirit guide to accept Jesus newly.

1. **Jesus tried and condemned to death (14:53, 55-65, 15:1-15)**

After Jesus was captured in the garden at Gethsemane, he was led away by the soldiers to Caiaphas, the high priest. Let’s look at verses 53, ***“They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law came together.”*** Currently, Jesus is in the courtyard of the high priest with the Sanhedrin. This assembly consisted of the high priest, all the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders—71 members in all. So, it was a considerable crowd that gathered in the residence of Caiaphas. Jesus was now standing, on trial before his accusers.

This trial is clearly a farce. The outcome was determined well before the trial was convened, for Mark records that the chief priests sought testimony against Jesus because they were determined to put him to death (55). The trial was illegal right from the very beginning: First, it was held at night, and Jewish law insisted that all trials of criminals before the priests be held in the daytime. Second, it met in the wrong place. The Sanhedrin was to meet only in the hall set aside for its purposes, and only meetings held there were valid. But this meeting was held in the residence of the high priest. Third, the Sanhedrin was prohibited by law from reaching a verdict on the same day that the trial was held, and here the verdict is passed immediately at the end of this absurd trial.

Yet, despite all the contrived testimony, things are not going well for the religious leaders, because the witnesses did not agree (56-59). As these witnesses recount the same event, it was obvious that they either were lying or had not been there. These were the best witnesses money could buy, and yet everything was falling apart and the religious leaders (?). The fact that Jesus’ enemies could not find any evidence against him is remarkable. If one wants to find “dirt” on someone, he should go to that person’s enemies. Yet, Jesus was innocent before the large group of his enemies who were experts in the law. Jesus is holy Son of God. He is the perfect Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

At this point, the high priest resorts to something entirely illegal. He attempts to force Jesus to incriminate himself. Look at verses 60-61a, ***“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?’ But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.”*** While Jesus was being interrogated by the religious leaders, he remained silent and gave no answer. It is human nature to defend oneself when accused falsely. Who would not defend himself especially when his life is at stake? But Jesus remained silent as Isaiah had prophesied, *“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 its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. (Is 53:7).”* Innocent Jesus stood silently in order to receive accusations for all our sins. Jesus did not try to save his life by defending himself against false witnesses. Instead, he remained silent because he decided to obey the will of God and save us. He did not need to defend himself from his accusers because he was ready to give his life for us.

The high priest, stunned by Jesus’ silence, made one last ditch effort to incriminate Jesus. To secure the answer he wants, he put Jesus under oath to testify against himself (Mt 26:63b). Then he asked, ***“…Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”*** During his earthly ministry, Jesus had never claimed his identity. But his words and miracles testified to his Messiahship and Sonship. No prophet turned water into wine or healed a man born blind (Jn 9:32). No prophet called God “Father.” The high priest knew in his conscience that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. But he asked this question to condemn Jesus. Jesus knew that his answer “Yes” would cost him his life. But, Jesus did not use any evasive words. Instead, Jesus clearly and bluntly answered. Let’s read verse 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.’”*** Jesus ignored all the other charges, but answered this one very clearly, so that the issue wasn’t about false testimony, but about Jesus’ identity. In Jesus’ answer, he testifies who he is. Let’s see who Jesus is.

First, Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus said, ***“I am.”***, he clearly identifies himself as the Messiah, the Son of God. The Messiah is God’s promised Savior and the Scriptures reveals that the Messiah’s origin is divine (2Sa 7:14; Isa 9:6; Mic 5:2). Here Jesus uses “I am.” The expression “I am” is the translation of the Hebrew word *Yahweh*, and translated as “Lord”. It was the personal name by which God revealed Himself. It is the name which God wanted to be known and worshipped in Israel. By saying “I am”, Jesus is revealing his deity as God, and the unity with the Father. Therefore, when Jesus spoke “I am”, the religious leaders recognized that Jesus was applying the name of God to Himself, and they considered it blasphemy and was now punishable by death.

Second, Jesus reveals that he will rise again and establish eternal kingdom. Let’s read verse 62 again, ***“‘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.’”***  Jesus would rise again and ascend to heaven. He would sit at the right hand of the throne of God Almighty and rule heavens and earth. Jesus uses the prophecy given to the Prophet Daniel. Daniel 7:13-14 reads*, “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”* Daniel lived in the darkest time in the history of Israel when his people were held in exile in Babylon. David’s kingdom was no more and its people degenerated to be sojourners under the oppression of world superpower nations. In the darkest time, God showed Daniel a vision of an eternal kingdom that would be established by the Christ. In the vision, the Christ was a son of man, but he comes with the clouds of heaven. Clouds symbolized divine presence and glory. The Son of Man was incarnated Son of God who would suffer and die for his people. After his resurrection and ascension, God would give him authority, glory and sovereign power and make him King and Lord of all peoples of the world. He would establish an eternal kingdom that will never be destroyed. Christ and his kingdom are the true hope of mankind.

Third, Jesus will come again as Judge. Jesus is not only King, but he also is the Judge, He judges good and evil with the majestic power of the Creator, holding his scepter in his right hand. Notice the word, “you”, which refers to not only the Jewish religious leaders, but to all mankind. All men will see Christ as God’s King and Judge one day. Thus the position will be reversed. Jesus will judge the Sanhedrin members who condemned him. They must see Jesus face to face when he comes again. Hebrews 9:27 says, *“Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,”* We often don’t see the justice we long for, in our own lives and in the world. Sometimes things just don’t make sense. Why do evil people seem to get away with injustice, and why do we suffer? But when Jesus comes again, all will be made right. For those who rejected him following evil, that day will be the day of dreadful judgment. For those who accepted him and followed him, that day will be the day of great victory, joy, and honor. He will wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no more death or crying or pain (Rev 21:4). In view of this, we have great hope, and a message of hope for an unjust and cruel world.

What was the response to Jesus’ answer? Look at verse 63-65, ***“The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. “You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” They all condemned him as worthy of death.*** ***Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, “Prophesy!” And the guards took him and beat him.”*** They first condemned Jesus to death. Then some began to spit at him, struck in in the face with their fists and mocked him, saying “Prophesy!”. The courtyard was full of unjust and lawlessness, representing human beings’ wickedness against holy God.

Finally, the whole Sanhedrin reached their decision they wanted—the death penalty. They bound Jesus and led him away to be handed over to Pilate for execution, for they had no power of execution. The chief priests had condemned Jesus for blasphemy, but when they brought Jesus to Pilate, they had to make up a political charge against Jesus, because Pilate would have nothing to do with a charge concerning Jewish religious controversies. Pilate asked Jesus***, “Are you the king of the Jews?”*** The king of the Jews was the Christ known to the Gentile world (Mt 2:2). Due to the Jewish expectation of an earthly messianic kingdom, even claiming to be the Christ could cause danger to Rome and thus call for a capital punishment.

What was Jesus’ reply to Pilate’s question, look at verse 15:2b, ***“‘You have said so,’ Jesus replied.”*** Jesus, answer of “yes”, reveals that Jesus is the King of the Jews. In John 18:36, Jesus told Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world. He is not the King that the Jews had been searching for.

In verses 3-15, Pilate knew Jesus was innocent. Pilate had an authority and choice to free Jesus, but he chose to compromise and secure his political future. Instead of setting Jesus free, in a political move, he set Barabbas free and had Jesus flogged, in hopes of appeasing the crowd. That moved failed. Rather than accepting his political moves, they shouted all the more to “Crucify him! Crucify him!” In Pilate weakness, he gave in to the crowd. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified. Because of Pilate’s compromise, he is known as the man who killed Jesus.

Jesus received 120 lashes of whipping on his body prior to crucifixion. The metal pieces attached to the whips tore his flesh. Then he was hung on a cross like the worst criminal, only to endure the scorn and mockery of the crowd. Why should he be condemned to death and be punished and torn apart? There is a story by Dr. Alexander Whyte, an Anglican theologian of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A man once dreamed that he saw a soldier cruelly flogging the sinless Son of God. The lash of the leaden studded whip cut deeply into Jesus’ quivering, blood-splattered flesh. “Oh the shame of it,” the dreamer said, as he rushed to stop the soldier. At that instant the soldier turned and in amazement, the dreamer recognized himself as the one wielding the bone-studded whip. The injustice and abuse suffered by the Son of God was not his weakness or his duty, but rather our evil, our iniquity and depravity that was laid upon Jesus .

700 hundred year earlier before Jesus’ trial and crucifixion, the Prophet Isaiah understood the meaning of the Messiah’s suffering and proclaimed in Isaiah 53, *“Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isa 53:4-5).* We are the ones who should stand before God’s judgment seat and receive a death sentence for our sins. We are the ones who should receive insult, shame and humiliation for all our wrongdoings. But God has laid on Jesus our sins and punishment. Jesus, the Son of God would come to be rejected, punished, torn apart, and killed as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of his people. Jesus is the Son of God. He came to suffer and die to save his people.

There is a legend of Martin Luther, that, during a serious illness, the devil entered his room and, looking at him with a triumphant smile, unrolled a big scroll which he carried in his arms. As Satan threw one end of it on the floor, it unrolled by itself. Luther’s eyes read the long, fearful record of his own sins, one by one. That stout heart quailed before the ghastly roll. Suddenly it flashed into Luther’s mind that there was one thing not written there. He cried aloud: “One thing you have forgotten. The rest is all true, but one thing you have forgotten: ‘The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.’” And as he said this, the Accuser and his heavy scroll disappeared.

Jesus, the Son of God, was tried and was sentenced to death in our place. Jesus was insulted, spit on, beaten, flogged, and crucified in our stead. In this way, God solved man’s sin problem and opened the way to the kingdom of God for those who believe in Jesus. Romans 8:1-2 says, *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”*  Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He calls each of us to trust in him, follow him, and enter his eternal kingdom.

1. **Peter denies Jesus (14:54, 66-72).**

While Jesus was in the midst of the Sanhedrin, Mark tells us that, “***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.” (54)*** Why was Peter hanging around the trial of Jesus? He wanted to prove his human loyalty and courage. However, as his fear grew, he was slowly falling away from his master's footsteps. As each new person confronted Peter, he denied his Lord. He first tried to escape, yet there was the servant girl. And finally, we he tried to move somewhere else, his true identity was exposed by his language. His Galilean accent gave it away. And it was at this point where Peter, did the unexpected, he called down curses on himself and insisted that the man was not telling the truth; and he swore, saying, ***"I don't know this man you're talking about."*** Peter reacted extremely to the allegation that he was a follower of Jesus. He adamantly denied that he was a disciple of Jesus. Because he followed at a distance, he was unable to stand up for Jesus when his life was in danger. Immediately, the rooster crowed the second time. Peter failed to choose Jesus, because he was still his own man. He had his own idea and agenda. He relied on himself more than accepting Jesus’ words.

What did Peter do when he heard the sound of the rooster? ***“Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him.”*** Peter broke down and wept." His heart was broken when he remembered the beautiful words of Jesus. His heart was broken when he remembered the beautiful love of Jesus poured out for him and all kinds of people. He wept for denying Jesus. He wept in his failure. He realized how weak he was. God opened his spiritual eyes to rely on Jesus not his own human strength. It was a necessary step for Peter to recognize that he was a sinner. Later, Peter would return to Jesus and strengthened other disciples. And later, he too, would stand up for Jesus and die for him. We can find a bit of Peter in ourselves. We all have been guilty of following Jesus at a distance, hiding our identity in the world as Jesus’ followers. Also, we all have denied Jesus’ Lordship over our lives. Now is the time to renew our relationship with Jesus’ Lordship and come to him for forgiveness and healing. It is a serious sin to disown Christ, but Jesus later forgave Peter (John 21:15-17). No sin is too great for Jesus to forgive if you are truly repentant. He will forgive even your worst sin if you turn from it and ask his pardon. Come to Jesus as you are. You cannot hide anything from Jesus. He knows everything. He knows you have fear in life. He knows you worry about many things. He knows you love this world. He knows you love him. He knows you failed many times. But Jesus was tried to take away your failures, your fears, your sorrows, and your despair.

In this passage, we learned that Jesus is the Son of God who came to be tried and condemned in our place. We also learned that Jesus is King and Lord and he will come to establish eternal kingdom and judge the world. May the Spirit guide us to help us remember Jesus words and follow him closely.