

Appealing the Court's Decision – Mark 14:53-65

I. Introduction:

- A. This begins a special week across most of Christendom. But it might be debated whether it should be.
1. This is the season when many professing Christians spend time thinking about the crucifixion of Christ.
 2. But I try my best to make you think about the cross throughout the year. *“The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*
 3. Despite being an evangelical preacher, I have decided today to go with the flow this morning.
 4. I'd like to point you some of the events which led up to the cross.
- B. As I hope you know, I am **predisposed** to **reject** the common opinion that Jesus was **crucified** on **Friday**.
1. I know that this is so commonly believed that to reject it makes people look like a fool, and I accept that title.
 2. I also know the usual arguments for a Friday crucifixion.
 3. But I choose to lean on **Jesus' own words** that He would be in the grave for **three days** and **three nights**.
 4. With that as my foundation, my conclusion is that Christ was crucified and died on Wednesday.
 5. And this means that the trials which Jesus was forced endure began on Tuesday and ended Wednesday.
- C. Each of the gospels give us accounts of Christ's time before the priests, the Sanhedrin and then Pilate.
1. But I have pieced together several passages which lay it all out in the most straight forward fashion.
- D. We begin with **John 18:12-14, 19-23** –
1. *“Then the band & the captain & officers of the Jews took Jesus, & bound him,* (This was at Gethsemane).
 2. *And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.* (Annas had been the high priest. He was still one of the most powerful Jews in Israel.)
 3. *Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.* (But he was thinking politically. *“Let's sacrifice Jesus to calm the Roman's anger toward us.”*)
 4. **Verse 19** – *The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. (“Doctrine” refers to the subjects of Jesus' teaching. But why did he ask about the disciples? Was it to have their names, in case their problem wasn't put to rest in getting rid of Jesus?)*
 5. *Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.* (Jesus referred only to His doctrine, and He didn't answer directly, taking the 5th, so to speak.)
 6. *And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?* (This was the first of many blows against Him.)
 7. *Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?*
- E. **Mark 14:53-65** –
1. *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: (Caiaphas, the acting high priest) and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.* (This was the Jewish national leadership – the Sanhedrin – made up primarily of the liberal Sadducee party, with a few Pharisees sprinkled in.)
 2. *And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.*
 3. *And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; (Their **pre-intended purpose** was to kill Jesus; to get rid of this trouble-maker but they) **found none.***
 4. *For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.* (Doesn't this show the Lord's miraculous control? Despite a concerted effort, the false accusers couldn't agree well-enough to make a case against Christ. The truth unifies, but it usually very hard to get lies to agree.)

5. *And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together.* (If you will remember, the Lord was speaking metaphorically about the temple of His body, not Herod's temple. And probably the priests knew this.)
6. *And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* (Jesus acknowledge the truth – He is the Son of God. This **Son** of God is actually **God** the Son.)
7. *Then the high priest rent (or tore) his clothes, & saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.* (But what is the definition of “*blasphemy*?” Isn't it to speak evil or to say something reproachfully. Jesus did not commit blasphemy.)
8. *And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.”* (I picture mostly old men here. Acting like vicious children, this was ludicrous and disgusting. It was definitely not worthy of dignified national leaders.)

F. Now lets conclude our reading with **Luke 22:66-71** –

1. *“And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together,* (The meeting broke up for a while. I am told that Jewish legal proceedings were illegal if held at night. Now, to make things official, the officials met again.) *and led him into their council, saying,*
2. *Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe:*
3. *And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.*
4. *Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.*
5. *Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? (Without denying it) He said unto them, Ye say that I am.*
6. *And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.* (The false witnesses they had purchased were no longer needed. In their opinion Jesus had condemned Himself.)

G. The “*trials*” of which we just read make up a legal case which we will be talking about throughout eternity.

1. Those events in Jerusalem, more than two thousand years ago, are still touching and affecting lives today.
 - a. They are one or two the great legal decisions that the American Supreme Court has made for us.
 - b. But this is infinitely more impactful.
2. The effects of those clandestine meetings will be energizing men's souls ten million eons from today.
3. And **YOUR** opinion of that trial and the subsequent execution will determine how **you** will spend eternity.

H. This trial and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, was **not** the **end** of a **lunatic's life** – nor the death of a **martyr**.

1. As was brought out in the proceedings themselves, this was the **trial** of the **eternal Son of God**.
2. *“Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.”*
3. I know that there are a skeptics who say,
 - a. *“If that was the Son of God, then how do you explain the fact that he lost His case?”*
 - b. *“Hundreds of American cases, prove that if you are rich enough to hire a good lawyer, you can get out of any charge, no matter how many bloody gloves might prove your guilt.”*
 - c. *“If Jesus was the Christ, then He should have been smart enough to avoid the charges laid against him in the first place.”*

I. That is **my theme** this morning: *“How was it that Jesus lost this court case?”*

1. What did He do wrong? What mistakes did He make?
2. The quick answer is that He did nothing wrong, and He made no mistakes.
3. Things went exactly as they had been planned & prophesied thousands of years before the actual events.

II. How did Jesus lose His case? On what grounds could we launch an appeal?

- A. Some might say that He should never have been arrested in the first place, but He didn't know that there was a traitor among his disciples.
1. Using American jurisprudence, it might be argued that this was an illegal arrest.
 2. Jesus was taken the night before His crucifixion because Judas, the treasurer of the group, had turned "*state's evidence*" and lead the authorities to the place where Jesus was spending that part of the night.
 3. If Christ had only known about Judas, He might have avoided that arrest.
 4. The state had already proven that they could not arrest Christ publically, during the day. They had tried.
 5. They were cowards, and they had no legal grounds to take Lord, so they sent their SWAT team in at night.
- B. But, of course, Jesus *did* know all about Judas.
1. Not only was this betrayal prophesied thousands of years earlier – it was prophesied again just hours earlier – by Christ Himself.
 - a. *Psalms 41 and 55*, written by David somewhere around 1,000 BC, speak of the betrayal of Christ.
 - b. And then at the Last Supper it became clear that Jesus knew of the Judas' plans.
 2. Christ knew that Judas was an hypocrite, a church-going child of Satan, like so many church people today.
 - a. He knew that the man was receiving more than two dozen pieces of silver for his betrayal work.
 - b. That additional fact had been prophesied in *Zechariah 11*.
 3. The truth of the matter is that Judas was a key player in the larger program of the always-in-charge God.
 4. In fulfilling these prophesies, God was adding more proof to the truth about this man named "*Jesus.*"
- C. Also, it might be argued that Christ's disciples could have rescued Him from the mob following Judas that night.
1. I'm not sure that was possible.
 2. But, again, it was prophesied in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be *forsaken* by His followers.
 3. We can read of that in *Zechariah 13:7*.

III. What did Christ Jesus do to lose in this day at court? On what grounds could we launch an appeal?

- A. Here locally two years ago, four college kids were murdered, and the story became national head-line news.
1. *Bryan Kohberger* was arrested apparently trying to escape by fleeing to Pennsylvania.
 2. Since then, among other things his defense team has tried to argue that the local jury pool has been contaminated because everyone knows something about the case.
 3. They claim that no one in this part of the world is still unbiased. It is almost impossible to find people whose minds are not already made up one way or the other – mostly against Kohberger.
- B. If Christ had been given a jury trial, again, it might have been very difficult to find unbiased jurors.
1. In fact, in most of the world, it might still be difficult today.
 2. There were many people, Judeans and Galileans, who loved Christ – for various reasons.
 - a. There were perhaps hundreds whom Jesus had healed or who had loved ones whom Jesus healed.
 - b. Those people were certainly saying very good things about the Lord.
 3. And there were many who believed the prophesies and what the Lord had been teaching – people like the disciples.
 4. There were multitudes who had either been miraculously fed or yearned to be fed by God with the resumption of the Heavenly manna, so they didn't want to see Jesus go.
- C. But then on the other hand, Christ Jesus had not been trying to become a popular figure.
1. He was not catering to the crowds, hoping for support, just in case it was needed.
 2. Instead of *condemning* the *foreign politics* of Romans, He condemned the *social policies* of the Jews.
 - a. He blistered the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and the liberalism of the Sadducees.
 - b. He condemned the common attitudes toward instant divorce, and adultery, and fraud, and lying.
 - c. He ripped apart the empty, ceremonial, just-for-show religion which was so common.

- d. He said that if people didn't mean business with God, then God meant trouble for them.
 - e. He attacked their feasts, and their fasting, and their pride-filled praying.
 - f. He had even condemned their boasting about their forefathers Abraham and David.
3. No, Jesus certainly got no sympathy from the press or the media.
 4. In fact there was an ever growing number who literally feared and thus hated Christ.
 5. If nothing more they feared that Christ would provoke the Romans to destroy Israel.
 6. No wonder He lost His case.

IV. Some people look at the actual court proceedings and say that the problem was there.

- A. For example, a lot of people say that Jesus' trial before Annas and then Caiaphas was illegal.
 1. That would have been true if Jesus was actually being tried – but this was not really a trial.
 - a. It was more like a **Grand Jury investigation**. The rules are very different in such a situation.
 - b. For example, guilt doesn't have to be proven – only that there is a reasonable assumption of guilt.
 - c. If it appeared that the Jesus was guilty of some crime, then He was to be sent to Pilate.
 2. By the year **170 AD**, the Jewish Mishnah spoke about the rules for Jewish court proceedings.
 - a. For example, the High Priest was not permitted to make any formal questioning of the accused.
 - b. He was merely the judge, overseeing things.
 - c. And the trial was not to take place at night.
 - d. The accused was required to have legal representation.
 - e. The verdict could not be handed down on the same day as the trial.
 - f. And any accusation of "**blasphemy**" had to involve the misuse of the actual name of God.
 3. We are also told that these were the rules of trials long before the Mishnah.
 4. And if this is true, then what was done to Christ was indeed illegal on all five points.
 5. But this trial was more to determine what charges to lay against Jesus before the Roman court.
 6. The Jews didn't have authority to execute criminals in those days.
 7. What they ultimately wanted would have to come from the Romans.
- B. A couple of other things involved the so-called witnesses against Christ.
 1. Jesus' enemies looked high and low for people who could accuse Jesus of some capital crime.
 2. But His character was perfectly spotless; never once had he even spoken a sin let alone committed a crime
 3. Finally the corrupt prosecutor found some men willing to twist Jesus' words about the temple, and he labeled those words "**blasphemy.**"
 4. Number one – what Jesus said had nothing to do with the temple in Jerusalem.
 - a. He was talking about the temple which was His body – destroyed and restored in three days.
 5. Second, even if it had been about the temple, it was neither blasphemy nor criminal.
 - a. I might be a lunatic – telling you that there are men living on the moon, but I wouldn't be a criminal.
 - b. And by the way, Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, said exactly that – there are men on the moon. He was either a lunatic or a liar, or both.
 6. And then third, those false witnesses were never cross-examined.
 7. The scriptures declare that those men were not good people and credible witnesses in the first place.
 8. The High Priest had nothing against the Lord to this point, and he knew it.

V. So what happened that Jesus lost His day in court?

- A. The High Priest saw that things weren't going well for his side, so he stepped right in.
 1. The district judge became the prosecuting attorney in the trial of the Judge of God's Supreme Court.
 2. The Jewish high priest tried to force the Lord Jesus to testify against Himself.
 3. At first Christ refused, but then that priest of Satan asked Him, "**Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?**"
 4. He was hoping that Jesus would say that He was "**the Christ,**" because that would make him a rival to the Roman Government.
 5. In that there was grounds for His condemnation.

- B. But Caiaphas stayed with the Jewish term – *“blasphemy.”*
1. Jesus’ answer was far more than that priest had bargained for.
 2. The Saviour not only said, *“I am”* the Christ, the Messiah.
 3. But he also said, *“You shall some day see me, the Son of Man, sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in clouds of heavenly angels.”*
 4. Christ could have taken the fifth amendment and perhaps walked away a free man.
 5. But He opened His mouth and gave the Jews – not one reason to condemn him — but two.
 6. *“I am the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of David, who shall rule over this land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates.”* *“I am the one who will sit at the right hand of God Himself.”*
 7. *“And I shall return to this earth to judge you and all the other wicked souls of this world.”*
- C. Of course I only paraphrased Jesus’ actual words, but let me assure you the hearts of those wicked priests heard what I just told you.
1. *“Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.”*
 2. When the priests heard Jesus’ words they may, or may not, have thought about **Daniel 7:13-14** –
 - a. *“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.*
 - b. *And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”*
 3. They may, or may not, have thought about **Psalms 110** –
 - a. *“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*
 - b. *The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.*
 - c. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.*
 - d. *The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*
 - e. *The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.*
 - f. *He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.*
 - g. *He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.”*
 4. Jesus declared – *“I am the Messiah,”* but *“Messiah is NOT ALL that I am. I am the Judge of Heaven and earth.”*
- D. It has been said that *“the man who hires himself as his lawyer has a fool for a client.”*
1. If **Matthew 26** was only a chapter in a history book, we might agree with that statement.
 2. But this is not the case.

VI. In the sight of the Jews, Jesus condemned Himself, and He was presented to the Romans for execution.

- A. The Creator of the Universe was nailed to a cross and hung out to dry.
1. In preparation for that He was beaten, mocked, stripped, decorated, slapped around & crowned with thorns.
 2. He who did no sin, in word or in deed, was lifted up between heaven and earth on a wooden gibbet.
 3. They gambled for his clothes, just as it had been prophesied in **Psalms 22**.
 4. The nails pierced his hands and feet, but they missed the bones, and not a bone of him was broken as was prophesied in **Zechariah 12:10** as well as was illustrated in the sacrifice of the Passover lamb.

- B. Clearly, the Bible shows that Jesus could have prevented, avoided, or overturned His crucifixion.
1. At the very least He could have called ten-thousand angels to destroy the world and set Him free.
 2. But he chose none of those things.
 3. *"If thou be Christ save thyself and us."*
 4. *"Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."*
 5. He was the Christ. He is the Son of God, emerging from death after three days in the tomb.
- C. Because it was the intention of God, from before the foundation of the earth, to supply a perfect sacrifice and remedy for the sins of repentant human beings...
1. Jesus died on the cross as a substitute for my death and judgment – but more than that.
 2. He traded his eternal, righteous life, for **my** wretchedly sinful life.
 - a. *"As many as receive this Christ, to them gives he power to become the children of God."*
 - b. *"He was wounded for my transgressions and bruised for my iniquities."*
 - c. *"The chastisement of my peace was laid upon him, and by his stripes I have been healed."*
 3. Christ was not simply taken by wicked men and executed.
 - a. He was delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God to be the substitutionary Saviour of God's elect people.
 - b. Of all whom will come to Him in repentance and faith.
- D. The world might look at the trial of Christ and say that through His mistakes Jesus lost an easy case.
1. But despite the fact that the trial ended in His death on the cross, the case was not lost.
 2. **Romans 1:4** says that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God though all of this.
 - a. Jesus was *"declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."*
 3. 72 hours after His crucifixion, Christ rolled back the stone which was laid upon the doorway of His tomb.
 4. He stepped out of the darkness of the tomb into the twilight of the garden outside of Jerusalem.
 5. By that resurrection He declared that His work of salvation was perfectly accomplished.
 6. *"He was delivered for our offenses against God, and He was raised again for our justification."*
 - a. That is, He was offered as a sacrifice to satisfy the demand of the law against the sinner.
 - b. He was delivered from among the dead to prove that His sacrifice got the job done.
 7. And now, any and every sinner, who will acknowledge his sin and turn from it, putting his trust in the finished work of the cross, is given eternal life and forgiveness of sin — guaranteed.
- E. Even you may have complete and full assurance of acceptance with God if you will repent of your sin, and cling by faith to the ever-living Saviour.
1. Every Lord's day is resurrection day. Every day of the week we should think back upon the death of Christ.
 2. This is a glorious day, but only if you have been born again by God's grace.
 3. This same Son of Man will one day soon descend again *"in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" – I Thessalonians 1:8.*
 4. That is what Jesus declared to the High Priest – and it made that man furious.
 5. But it is the truth, and I declare it now to you, because we are all in eternal peril without Christ Jesus.
- F. Are the living Christ & His Holy Spirit, squeezing your heart this morning, telling you that these things are true?
1. Will you acknowledge that you are in need of the Saviour today?
 2. Christ is calling you to go to the cross and to the empty tomb.
 3. **Repent** of your sin before God and **believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ.