

The Trials of Jesus

Mark 14-15, John 18, Luke 23, Matthew 26

- Today I want to go about our passage a little but differently. Because whenever we get to the time between Jesus' arrest and then His death, there is so much that goes on during that time that we do not get from one single gospel.
- However, whenever we piece together the 4 Gospel accounts, we get a clear picture of everything that took place and the complete and utter injustice that Jesus endured.
- Last week we discussed how Jesus, knowing everything that was going to happen to Him, still took out the time to have one last special meal with His guys
- At this Last Supper He redefined the passover meal and instituted the practice of communion that we still observe today.

- And then through Mark 14, we won't have it here on the screen but I hope you had been studying it in your community groups this week, after they are done with dinner, they sing a hymn and then make their way to the Mount of Olives to pray
- On the way Jesus tells them that they will get scared and leave Him, but Peter declares that He NEVER would, then Jesus predicts his denial.
- Then when they get to Gethsemane, Jesus goes off to pray, and verse 35 says, ***“He fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what You will.” -Mark 14:35-36 (ESV)***
- Then He returns to find his disciples sleeping, He wakes them up, then goes off to pray again, then comes back, again, they're sleeping, so He wakes them up again, then

goes to pray again and verse 41 says, **“And He came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, My betrayer is at hand.” -Mark 14:41-42 (ESV)**

- Then at that moment they hear some commotion off in the distance. They look and see a dim glow, its flickering is getting brighter and brighter and they can tell that it’s the glow from torches.
- Then they hear the footsteps get louder and louder to the point that it sounds like marching.
- Before they know it they are surrounded by this heavily armed crowd.
- There were some of the most prominent religious figures among them, there were highly trained Temple Guards with clubs and swords, and Judas, their friend, is leading them.

- John 18:3 says **“So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.”**

-John 18:3 (ESV)

- **Band (speira): a mass of men (a military cohort)**
 - So they felt the need to an entire military cohort to arrest one Man who only had 11 guys with Him as back up?
 - Well their concerns were valid because John goes on to tell us what happened when they tried to arrest Him.
- **“Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to Him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” They answered Him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I am He.” ... When Jesus said to them, “I Am He,” they drew back and fell to the ground.” -John 18:4-6 (ESV)**

- So there is some speculation as to what that really means, “They drew back and fell to the ground.”
- But if you go back to the original language and break down this verse phrase by phrase, it could literally be translated:
 - “When Jesus said to them, “I Am He, “The were sent off flying back and thrust into the earth.”
- Now that would have been sight to see. This Cohort, this mass of troops being knocked off of they’re feet by the power of Jesus merely saying three words
- No doubt that’s why Peter was full of so much confidence that even though they were outnumbered, He still felt comfortable pulling out his sword to fight them...wouldn’t you??
- *“Jesus you just keep talking and knocking them back and I’m gonna just swing my sword around and act like I’m doing somethin”*
- *And then we know from the context of the other Gospels that Peter actually made contact and cut off Malchus’ ear, the servant of the high priest, and Jesus rebukes him, makes him put his sword away and then puts the guys ear back on his head and heals him*
- And then to the disciples absolute surprise....Jesus just let’s Himself be arrested
- and in verse 50 of Mark it says this is when “they all left Him and fled.”
- ***“So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him.” -John 18:12 (ESV)***
- At this scene I can’t help but picture **the poster for the movie Man of Steel** that came out in 2016.
 - Before the movie had been seen by anyone, the blogger took notice of the poster and one caption said *“Is our hero a criminal?”*

- Another caption said, *“Putting Superman in handcuffs seems a bit silly as new “Man of Steel” poster arrives.*
- But that’s exactly who Jesus is here in this passage, He’s superman in handcuffs. Impossible to take by force, but willingly surrenders.
- Can you imagine being the handcuff guy?
 - You just got knocked to the ground by Him speaking. You just saw Him put a guy’s ear back on his head
 - Then they say “Cuff Him”
 - Nahhhhh, I’m cool on that....
- But nevertheless, Jesus allows Himself to be arrested, and what we’re about to see, in the span of 5 and a half hours, is Jesus go through 6 different trials.
- Mark 14:53 very vaguely says, **“And they led Jesus to the high priest. -Mark 14:53 (ESV)**
- But we know from context from the other gospels that 2 different trials took place here.
- John clearly states, **“First they led Him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.” -John 18:13 (ESV)**
- **TRIAL #1: ANNAS (2am)**
- A couple of things to note about Annas first:
 - Annas was not THE high priest at this time but he was still referred to as high priest. He had been THE high priest before but hadn’t held that office for some time
 - It’s kind of like how we still refer to former presidents as “Mr. President” even after they are out of office
- But Annas is still very much a major player with a lot of influence.
 - First off, he is the father-in-law of the current high priest...and the way this all goes down makes it seem like Annas may not be the

face of the operation but he's like the puppet master pulling the strings from the background

- Also, he is still very involved in the Temple administration and, in fact, his main revenue stream came from the Temple vendors. Whatever was sold at the Temple, he got a cut
- And you remember what Jesus did to the Temple vendors.
 - So not only is Jesus disrupting Temple business, He's hitting Annas, one of the most powerful and influential religious leaders alive, right in the wallet...DURING what was supposed to be the most profitable week of the year!
- So Annas already has a personal vendetta against Jesus, and before He faces anyone else, Annas wants Jesus brought to him.
- In verse 19 of John 18 it says, "**The high priest then questioned Jesus about His**

***disciples and His teaching."* -John 18:19 (ESV)**

- This exact tactic is what a lot of people use in order to try and disprove or discount Jesus.
 - They don't examine, Jesus, all that He is and all that He claims to be...they investigate the people who claim to follow Him, find flaws in them, and then use that to discount His teaching
 - This argument is never going to go away. Even one of Ghandi's most famous quotes comes from whenever he was asked what the greatest hindrance to Christianity was, he said, "Christians."
 - And there's truth to that, and we should use that as motivation to be the best, most faithful followers of Christ that we can possibly be
- However, no matter how good we try to be, people will always accuse us of being hypocrites.

- Why? Because we are flawed, broken, sinful, human beings trying to represent a Perfect God. And whenever we choose to follow Jesus, we don't automatically get it all together!
- We spend the rest of our lives in the slow process of maturation where we do everything we can to be just a little more like Him every single day.
- But what sets us apart, is that we have the Hope of Eternity where one day all of the brokenness and hurt of this world will one day be wiped away
 - But at this point, RIGHT NOW, We're not perfect... we never will be,
 - But the purpose of our lives is not to BE PERFECT, but to Know the PERFECT ONE, and Grow in Him more every day.
- However, for those who keep Jesus on trial in their lives, whenever they start with His disciples for opening arguments against Him...

well they'll be able to twist that case however they want.

- Just like Annas was doing. First he questions Jesus' disciples, and for example: Let's imagine he used Peter as his argument. He could have said...
 - "So, I heard that this Peter, is known to be your right hand man. And sure you teach about peace, and love, and respecting authority...but yet your right hand man, not 1 hour ago, cuts off a man's ear??"
 - "Tell me what kind of teacher are You, that You breed that kind of violence into your followers??"
- So sure, you can twist the story that way....IF you start with Peter.
 - BUT if you start with Jesus you see a supernatural show of power that no one had seen before whenever they came to arrest them. He rebuked Peter sharply and then immediately rights Peter's wrong, by healing the man.

- And even though He was powerful enough to knock a mob to the ground by speaking, and even though He was powerful enough, loving enough and caring enough to heal the man's ear! He still allowed Himself to be arrested peacefully.
- The narrative completely changes whenever you start with Jesus.
- So Jesus answers Annas in verse 20, ***"I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said."*** When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, ***"Is that how you answer the high priest?"*** Jesus answered him, ***"If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?"*** Annas then sent Him bound

to Caiaphas the high priest." -John 18:20-24 (ESV)

- Now we see Jesus being take to His second trial:
- **TRIAL #2: Caiaphas (3:30am)**
- Again, this is the trial that Marks describes in chapter 14 verse 55
- ***"Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimony did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against Him, saying, "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.'" Yet even about this their testimony did not agree."*** -Mark 14:55-59 (ESV)
- Now already we are seeing so many holes in this trial. If this were to be looked at closely,

this whole case would have been thrown out so quickly because of all of the judicial rules that they were breaking.

- Jesus is in the midst of one of the most unjust trials of all time:

- **Injustice #1- The Timing**

- We see that these 2 trials are taking place in the dead of night. Historians believe Jesus was taken to Annas at about 2am, was there for about an hour and a half, and then was taken across the courtyard where He would be tried by Caiaphus and a portion of the Sanhedrin that he knew would agree with him.
- *But according to Jewish law, trials could only occur during the day so that trials could be public and open to scrutiny if needed*
- *Also, trials were not allowed to take place during holidays because of their sacredness and the traveling, but we know that this is taking place in the middle of the Passover celebrations.*

- **Injustice #2: - The Witnesses**

- According to Jewish law, all the witnesses accusing the defense, must agree on all of the details of the crime, and if not, the case would be thrown out immediately.
 - But Mark lets us know specifically that they couldn't find anyone who could agree or that wouldn't contradict themselves.
 - Also, according to Jewish law, if the witnesses were found to be lying, they were supposed to receive the punishment the accused was threatened to receive. Which was supposed to deter false accusations.
 - But instead of following the law, Caiaphus and those gathered just keep trying until they found something they want to hear.
- After hours of nothing working, in Matthews account he says, ***“And [Caiaphus] stood up and said, “Have You no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against You?” But Jesus remained silent. And the***

high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God.”

- This was an intentional move by Caiaphis because by saying this line, he was putting Jesus under oath which means that silence would be legally seen as an admission of guilt. So now Jesus responds....

- Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard His blasphemy. What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.” -Matthew 26: 62-66 (ESV)

- Then in the Mark 15:1, it says that they waited until morning, when this trial actually supposed to be held, to make official what this group had already decided when he says,

- “And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council.” -Mark 15:1 (ESV)

- And here we see the 3rd trial:

- TRIAL #3: THE SANHEDRIN (6am)

- Here in these next 2 trials we see more injustices

- Injustice #3: The Due Process

- The Sanhedrin was a group of 70 scribes, elders, and priests led by the high priest that served as Israel’s Supreme court.
- They were the ones that the cases were brought to and they were supposed to judge fairly and impartially.
- But in this case, they were the ones bringing the case up!
- So the Sanhedrin is serving as the prosecution and the judge at the same time...which obviously is not allowed.

- **Injustice #4: The Sentencing**

- According to Jewish Law the Sanhedrin had to have a vote in order to sentence someone to death. And this wasn't an "All in favor say aye!" type vote like we see them doing here
 - It was a vote that was supposed to go one by one, very slowly, starting with the youngest person in the room going to the oldest so the rookies would not be persuaded by the veterans.
- And the vote had to be unanimous, we which know it was not because at the end of Luke 23 we see Joseph of Arimathea coming to collect Jesus' body and Luke says, ***"...Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action."*** -**Luke 23: 50b-51 (ESV)**
- So we don't see a vote, we don't see an unanimous decision!

- But EVEN if they did unanimously agree... according to the law, if it was determined for someone to be sentenced to death. That ruling had to sit, and not be acted upon for 3 days
 - During those 3 days, the Sanhedrin would fast and pray to make sure that they made the right decision, and also that would leave more time for any other witnesses that might come forward and plead the cause of the accused
- Lastly, when the execution was to be carried out, whoever accused the guilty of the crime, would have to be the ones to carry out the execution...which again would deter some false accusers.
- But the Sanhedrin wasn't going to wait 3 days, and they definitely weren't going to carry out the execution themselves, instead they send Him off to His 4th Trial
- **TRIAL #4: PILATE (6:30am)**
- So we see that the official Sanhedrin trial, that should have been a long dragged out process

didn't last long at all because they began that process at 6am and by 6:30, Jesus was over at the local governors mansion in front of Pilate.

- ***“Then the whole company of them arose and brought Him before Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this Man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.” -Luke 23:1-2 (ESV)***
- *Where did that come from?? All three Jewish trials, they accuse Him of being guilty of blasphemy...then out of nowhere they accuse Him of telling the people not to pay their taxes?? Which we know is a lie because they tried to catch Jesus in that by saying, “You know some say it’s unlawful to pay taxes,” But Jesus just says, Pay unit Caesar that which is Caesar’s”....so that’s a flat out lie!*
- But they couldn't just bring Him to Pilate to be executed for religious reasons, they had to have something to make it seem like He was a

threat to the Romans that would get Pilate's attention.

- Now, let's get a little background on Pilate

- Pilate was the Roman governor over the region of Judea.
- But Pilate's tenure wasn't off to a very good start.
- Whenever he was first appointed governor, hung up banners of Tiberius Caesar's face in the temple. But no one's image was to be put up in the Temple, especially not a pagan emperor...that was blasphemy
- So the Jewish people protested. Pilate then agreed to meet with the Jewish leaders in the local amphitheater in order to hear out their concerns. But whenever the meeting started, he had the amphitheater surrounded with soldiers and threatened to kill them if they didn't get in line
- Well they called his bluff! Because the story goes that the people laid down, showed their

necks, and essentially said, "Do it!" ...then Pilate relented

- Not long after that, Pilate was given the task with building a new aqueduct in the area and in order to pay for it, he decided to raid the Temple and take the funds from there.
 - Which of course led to adamant protesting in the streets, and this time Pilate sends soldiers in common clothes into the mobs of protestors and at his signal, they took action and beat some of the protestors to death in the streets.
 - This caused such a commotion that Caesar ended up putting Pilate on an official probation and said if he had one more incident, he would be fired.
 - So of course Caiaphus knows this, and they are putting Pilate on the spot, giving him these trumped up charges.
 - But Pilate obviously doesn't wanna get involved, he's already on thin ice...
- So Pilate asked Jesus directly, ***"Are you the King of the Jews?" And He answered him, "You have said so." Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this Man." But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place." -Luke 23: 3-5 (ESV)***
 - Now Pilate sees his way out, "Oh He's from Galilee you say! That's Herod's jurisdiction, this means that this is his problem, not mine!"
 - So Pilate send Jesus off to His 5th trial:
 - **TRIAL #5: HEROD (7am)**
 - Now Herod had heard of Jesus, but never actually saw Him in Person, and verse 8 says, ***"When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see Him, because he had heard about Him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by Him." -Luke 23:8 (ESV)***

- Now at first glance, this seems promising. We've seen this story before, we've seen the lepers, the blind, the friends of a crippled man, the centurion, the woman with the flow of blood, even Zacchaeus — had all heard about Jesus, the wonderful works that He had done, they longed to see Him, and when they saw Him they were very glad, hoping that He would perform a miracle for them
 - And each of those stories ended with Jesus blessing them beyond their wildest dreams
- But verse 9 says, ***“So he questioned Him at some length, but He made no answer.”***
-Luke 23:9 (ESV)
 - So what was different here?? Why does Herod get the cold shoulder when so many others received their miracle??
- Well the biggest difference here is that every other story we've seen had to do with a level of faith
 - How many times had we heard Jesus say, “Your faith has saved you, or Your faith has made you well.”
 - But Herod had no faith, he had no intention of ever having any faith...he wanted to be entertained.
- Charles Spurgeon once said about this encounter with Herod, ***“Our Lord Jesus Christ came not into this world to be a performer: He did not leave His glory to earn the wondering approbation of men; and as Herod regarded Him as a mere wonderworker, and would have turned his court into a theatre wherein Jesus should be the chief actor, our Lord very wisely held His peace and did nothing at all.”*** -Charles Spurgeon
- You see, many of us only want to come to Jesus by Herod's standards.
- First We want Jesus brought to us, at our own convenience.

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- Now, Jesus did come to us first, that is evident by Him being on the planet in the first place! He is Emmanuel, God with us!
- But there's no such thing as a one-way relationship
- And every other aforementioned story, involved someone seeking out Jesus themselves
 - Herod had every opportunity to seek out Jesus. John the Baptist had witnessed to him numerous times. No doubt he was told about the Messiah. He could have sent for Jesus, he could have gone to one of his teachings, when rumors spread that He was in town, he could have invited Jesus over for a meal
 - But he showed no interest in connecting with Jesus
- And when Jesus is brought to him, he isn't seeking to worship Him, or have any sort of life change...he simply wants to be entertained
 - This is the second way that many of us only want to come to Jesus
 - If He shows us something that we want to see.
 - But what Herod completely misunderstood is that Jesus never once performed a miracle to put on a show or save His own skin. Which He easily could have done.
 - Jesus only ever worked a miracle out of compassion and care for broken people
 - Now Herod was definitively a broken person, but he wasn't broken before God. He thought too much of himself! He fancied Himself a king! (Even though he wasn't, and had no real authority at all because he was subject to the Romans just like everyone else)
 - But that didn't change how much he thought of himself, and Jesus gives him nothing but silence.
 - James 4:6 says "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." And that is evident here.

- So Jesus stays silent, not giving Herod anything he was looking for and verse 10 says, ***“The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing Him. And Herod with His soldiers treated Him with contempt and mocked Him. Then, arraying Him in splendid clothing, he sent Him back to Pilate.” -Luke 23:10-11 (ESV)***
- No doubt the priests are telling Herod all of the same accusations that we’ve been hearing, which Herod wouldn’t have cared much about, until they tell him that Jesus considers Himself a king!
- Now that would have struck a cord with Herod, because he’s a fake king, always trying to prove to himself and others that he actually is somebody
 - So they mock Him, make fun of Him, probably slap Him around a bit, while sarcastically referring to Him as “Your Majesty”
 - Then they dress Him up in royal clothes as a joke for Pilate as they send Him back for His final trial.
- **TRIAL #6 PILATE (7:30am)**
- Pilate had to be exasperated whenever he sees Jesus being brought back to Him.
- Luke says, ***“Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, “You brought me this Man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining Him before you, behold, I did not find this Man guilty of any of your charges against Him. Neither did Herod, for he sent Him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. I will therefore punish and release Him.” -Luke 23:13-16 (ESV)***
- That punishment was going to be whipping Jesus’ back with sharp metal objects specifically designed to grab the skin and rip the flesh to the point that most times they did

this, you could see the person's kidney by the time they were done.

- Surely this is punishment enough! But they still weren't satisfied...then Pilate has an idea.

There is a tradition that on each Passover day, that the Romans would release one political prisoner back to the Jewish people. And Mark tells us:

- ***“Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered Him up.”-Mark 15:6-10 (ESV)***
- So Pilate thinks he's going to turn the table on them. He gives them a choice. “Here I have

Barrabas, a known murderer, completely guilty....I can release him to you, OR I can release this Man that we find completely innocent.”

- But in verse 11 says. ***“But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” And they cried out again, “Crucify Him.” And Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has He done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify Him.” So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, (other gospels say ‘out of fear that they would riot’) released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.” -Mark 15:11-15 (ESV)***
- Can you imagine being Barabbas here?
 - *You're woken up at the break of dawn, roughed up by the guards, and jerked out of your cell*

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- *You're not surprised because you knew this day was coming for a while now. Its execution day.*
- *You're brought before Pilate and a large crowd. Again not surprising...the Romans love public executions*
- *Then you hear Pilate silence the crowd and declare... "Should I release to you this guilty murderer? Or this innocent Man??"*
- *What is this some kind of sick joke?*
- But then to your complete surprise, the people start chanting, "We want Barabbas....We. Want. Barabbas!"
 - "Really? You serious?"
- Then the guards come over grab your wrists, unlock your chains, and move your chains over to this Man..
 - *What do you make eye contact? Do you try and figure out who He is? Do you ask any questions at all?*
- Then you're led down the steps, among the people, into the streets, you're free to go
- *What happens when you're walking around that day? The Romans put the crosses on the most public street sides with the most foot traffic... do you walk by and look up at that Man on the Middle Cross where you're supposed to be?*
 - What do you do now? Where do you go from here?
- Now the reality is, we don't know what Barabbas did, or where he went from there.
- But what is really interesting about him is the meaning of his name. It's so basic...**Bar- means "son...Abba- means "father"**
- So his name literally means "son of a father", and we see The Son of THE Father taking his place...so why involve Barabbas in this story at all?
- Because he represents basic humanity!
- We don't see how Barabbas responded, because that's not the point! The point isn't

how did Barrabas respond, to point is HOW
ARE YOU GOING TO RESPOND!

- The curse of sin, put you and I on death row. Because the wages of sin is death.
- So our sin, our selfishness, our lies, our wrongdoings, no matter how big or little we may see them...put us in chains bound for an eternity of hopelessness.
- We're stuck! In a straitjacket of sin, just awaiting our sentence.
- But then Superman hands cuffs, just stands there on the platform in silence, and allows your chains to become His chains
 - Allowed your sentence to become His sentence
 - Takes your guilt upon Himself
- And allows you to go free, so that you could have the opportunity to live the rest of your days as a child of The Father in Heaven who's very image you were created in!

- CS Lewis said, ***"The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God."*** - CS Lewis
- Now the question is, how are you going to respond to it?
 - Are you going to keep Him on trial?
 - Are you going to keep looking at His flawed followers as an excuse?
 - Are you going to wait until He's convenient for you or what you expect?
- *If you were to die today, what would happen? Where would you go?*
- *If you are in this room today and you cannot confidently answer that question...I'm here to tell you that Jesus took your place on that cross so that you could have the complete assurance of salvation.*