

KING JESUS WAS TRIED AND CONDEMNED FOR US

Mark 14:53-15:15

Key Verse 14:62

“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.”

Have you ever stood before a judge and a court? Fortunately, I have not ever stood trial, but I have been treated as a criminal when I was in Venezuela. One day in 1997, I was walking on the streets. Unexpectedly, a police official stopped me to check my ID, but I was not carrying my passport. Then, he pushed me in a police van that was transporting many undocumented people. After around 20 minutes of driving, the van arrived at a police station where I was investigated. They put my fingerprints, took some photos of me, unbuckled my belt, took away my mobile phone, removed my glasses and shoes, and put me in jail. It was the first time to be jailed in my life, and I felt very humiliated and ashamed. At the same time, I felt frustrated for the injustice and corruption that I was facing in that moment. I did not have any right to call a lawyer or others. I tried to defend myself insisting that I had left my passport at my house; but they did not pay attention to me. Finally, I had to beg a police official to borrow his mobile phone and pay some money to call my wife. She was working at the Korean Embassy in Venezuela and called to the police station to prove that I was not undocumented. After around two hours, an employee of the Korean Embassy came to the police station, and I could be released from prison. It was a very unpleasant experience for me. We are very upset and frustrated when we face unfair violence. We would not tolerate injustice if we had the power to destroy it. However, our Lord Jesus Christ was violently mistreated, tried, and condemned by unjust authorities. Jesus is the Son of God and could destroy them with the power of his heavenly army; but he did not do it. On the contrary, Jesus remained silent without defending himself. Finally, he was sentenced to be crucified to death. Why? Today's message will give us the answer. There are three parts in this message: first, Jesus before the Jewish religious leaders; second, Peter disowns Jesus; third, Jesus before Pontius Pilate.

First, Jesus before the Jewish religious leaders (14:53-65)

Jesus was arrested by a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees after his intense prayer at Gethsemane (Jn 18:3). It was an illegal arrest because they had no warrant nor authority to arrest him. Sanhedrin was composed of 71 members from the Sadducees and the Pharisees. All the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law came together to the assembly (53). The assembly

was unlawful because Hebrew laws prohibited such a meeting at night, or during the Feast of the Passover. Yet, they opened an emergency assembly at night in violation of the laws to kill Jesus because they feared people who followed and believed him as the Messiah.

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death (55a). Deuteronomy 19:15 says, **“One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”** Hence, they needed at least two testimonies of eyewitnesses verified in accordance with Jewish law to put Jesus to death. But they did not find any (55b). Many testified falsely against Jesus, but their statements did not agree (56). Therefore, the ruling priests were not finding any incriminating evidence against Jesus. Some stood up and gave a false testimony saying, **“We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands.’”** (58) But it was a lie. Jesus never said that he would destroy the temple. Jesus predicted that the temple would be destroyed completely (13:2). After cleansing the temple courts, Jesus told the Jews: **“Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days”** (Jn 2:19). John comments that the temple he had spoken of was his body (Jn 2:21). Jesus did not say that he himself would destroy the temple. The Jews believed that the Messiah would rebuild the temple of Jerusalem (Zechariah 6:12). Therefore, by making the false statement that Jesus would rebuild the temple ‘not made with hands’ they wanted to accuse Jesus of blasphemy. However, their testimony did not agree (59).

Then, the high priest Caiaphas lost his patience with the ineffective testimonies and took a more direct approach to get evidence against Jesus. He stood up in the midst of the council and asked Jesus, **“Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?”** (60) But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer (61a). Jesus refused to answer the false testimony because it was not worth answering. In addition, Jesus did not defend himself before the false testimonies because he had made the decision to die on the cross for our sins, obeying God’s will. In this way, he fulfilled the prophesy of Isaiah 53:7, **“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.”**

Then, Caiaphas changed his strategy, interrogating Jesus with a clever question: **“Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”** (61b) The chief priest was not asking it to know the truth, but to set a trap for Jesus emphasizing ‘you.’ “Are YOU the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” “The Messiah” means the anointed king, and “the Son of the Blessed One” means the Son of God. It was a very dangerous question for Jesus to respond to. Any positive answer could put him into death. Jesus could stay silent as he did before. But what did he do? Jesus responded with a clear affirmation saying, **“I am”** (62a). Jesus revealed his identity clearly as the Messiah and the Son of God. Jesus

did not try to escape from danger. On the contrary, he revealed the truth to those who were seeking to take his life. Furthermore, Jesus gave them a warning and an opportunity to repent saying, ***“And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven”*** (62b). This means that the members of the Sanhedrin will see Jesus as the Son of Man who will come in judgment. The high priest and his priestly colleagues were judging Jesus, but the day would come when they would see Jesus coming as the Judge. How could Jesus speak clearly of his identity as the Messiah and the Son of God before the Jewish religious authorities? It was possible because Jesus had prayed intensely at Gethsemane and made a solid decision to die on the cross according to God’s will. It was possible because Jesus had a deep relationship with God the Father and trusted in him fully. It was possible because Jesus kept God’s mission in his heart and moved forward to carry it out during his life.

Then, what must the Jewish religious leaders do before the clear messianic declaration of Jesus? They had to repent of their sins sincerely and ask the mercy of God to be saved. However, they were too wicked to do it. The high priest tore his clothes (63a). The action of tearing one’s clothes was an expression of great anguish. He did not tear his clothes for his sins, but for Jesus’ self-identification as the Messiah and the Son of the Blessed One. He said, ***“Why do we need any more witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”*** (64a) Blasphemy is an attitude of disrespect against the character of God. The high priest acted as if he was very anguished and mournful for the blasphemy; but in his heart he was very happy and cheerful for finding a cause to kill Jesus.

They did not need any more testimonies against Jesus because the high priests and the members of the Sanhedrin became eyewitnesses. Therefore, they all condemned Jesus as worthy of death (64b). Then some began to spit at Jesus; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, “Prophesy!” And the guard took him and beat him (65). In this way, Jesus fulfilled his prediction that they would: “mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him” (10:34).

Second, Peter disowns Jesus (14:66-72)

Peter’s denial of Jesus is told between the trials before the Jewish leaders and before Pontius Pilate. When Jesus was arrested, Peter followed him at a distance (54a). This distance shows well his inner condition. He could not run away from Jesus nor follow him closely. He maintained a safe distance from Jesus. Someone may keep a safe distance from Jesus. They do not want to quit following Jesus, nor do they commit themselves to follow him. In reality, this kind of safe distance is a dangerous distance that makes one abandon Jesus in a crisis. Peter entered the courtyard of the high priest where he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire (54b). While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by (66). When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him and said, ***“You also were with that Nazarene,***

Jesus.” (67) The servant girl did not accuse or threaten Peter, but just expressed her observation. But Peter overreacted with great fear saying, **“I don’t know or understand what you’re talking about.”** (68a) He denied knowing Jesus and went out into the entryway (68b). When the servant girl saw Peter the second time, she became more convinced and told those standing around, **“This fellow is one of them.”** (69) Then, Peter denied it again (70a). After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, **“Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.”** (70b) The situation of Peter became worse because the crowd identified him. They recognized Peter as a follower of Jesus because of his Galilean accent (Mt 26:73). Then, Peter got very nervous and began to call down curses and swore to them, **“I don’t know this man you’re talking about.”** (71) Peter denied Jesus in the most emphatic manner possible. He did not even mention Jesus’ name and his curse was directed against Jesus. Immediately the rooster crowed the second time: “Cock a doodle doo~” (72a). Luke tells us that the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter (Lk 22:61a). Then Peter remembered the word of Jesus: **“Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times.”** At that moment, Peter recognized that Jesus’ prophecy was fulfilled (72b). Peter went outside, broke down and wept bitterly (72c). It was a painful experience of failure for Peter. Probably, after this event, whenever he heard the crowing of a rooster, he remembered his shameful failure. Perhaps he grew to hate any kind of chicken food, like chicken noodle soup, fried chicken, chicken sandwich, etc.

Why did Peter fail in following Jesus as his disciple? When Jesus told him that he would disown Jesus three times, Peter insisted emphatically, **“Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you”** (14:31). He wanted to be faithful to Jesus, but he did not have enough faith to die with Jesus. Then, he had to pray earnestly not to fall into temptation. But he did not pray because he trusted himself. When we trust ourselves, we will fail in following Jesus. We must recognize our weaknesses and pray humbly to God asking His help. Peter’s painful experience can be our own experience any time. May God help us pray humbly and earnestly so that we can continue to follow Jesus as his disciples even in the middle of a spiritual crisis.

Third, Jesus before Pontius Pilate (15:1-15)

Very early in the morning after interrogating Jesus all night, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin (15:1a). From the beginning, they had no plan to put Jesus to death themselves. They expected the Roman governor Pontius Pilate to do this. So, they acted immediately. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate (1b). It was illegal because the Jewish law specified that a guilty verdict in a capital crime had to be delayed until the next day. They broke many Jewish laws. It was unfair and an abuse of power. However, Jesus remained silent without defending himself to accomplish God’s redemptive work for us. In this way, Jesus’ words were fulfilled, **“The Son of Man will be delivered over to the**

chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles.” (10:33)

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea. He was notorious for anti-Semitic policies aimed at the destruction of the Jewish people. Thus, he faced strong resistance from the Jews and his position was already at risk when the Jewish religious authorities pressured him to execute Jesus. Pilate did not want to be bothered with the case of Jesus, so he told them to judge him by their own law (Jn 18:31). However, the Jewish religious leaders knew that Pilate would not accept their charge of blasphemy. So, they accused Jesus of subverting the nation, opposing payment of taxes to Caesar, and claiming to be Messiah, a king (Lk 23:2). It was an entirely new charge against Jesus. The Sanhedrin had condemned him for blasphemy, but his charge was changed so that Pilate could take the case, which was unlawful.

Pilate concerned himself only with the charge that Jesus claimed to be a king. It sounded like treason. Pilate began to interrogate Jesus: **“Are you the king of the Jews?”** (2a) Jesus replied, **“You have said so.”** (2b) Pilate urged Jesus to answer his accusers, but Jesus made no reply, which amazed Pilate (5). Pilate realized that Jesus was innocent and tried to set him free (Jn 19:12). He told the Jews, **“I find no basis for a charge against him.”** (Lk 23:4) In fact, according to Luke’s gospel, Pilate declared four times that he had found no basis for a charge against Jesus (Lk 23:4, 14, 15, 22). So, Pilate should release Jesus immediately. However, he wanted to negotiate with the Jews using the custom of releasing one prisoner at the time of the Passover. He asked the crowd, **“Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?”** (Mt 27:17) Barabbas, also called Jesus Barabbas, was in prison for an insurrection and murder. Pilate expected the crowd to choose Jesus the Messiah to be released. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead (11). The crowd shouted, **“Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!”** (Lk 23:18) Pilate was surprised by the unexpected response of the crowd. He asked them again, **“What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?”** (12) They shouted, **“Crucify him! Crucify him!”** Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting (Mt 27:24a). He worried about his political career that was already in jeopardy. He took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. He said, **“I am innocent of this man’s blood. It is your responsibility.”** (Mt. 27:24b) Finally, wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified (15).

Even though he washed his hands to be innocent of the death of Jesus, he could not avoid his responsibility. The Apostles Creed records that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate. Every Christian remembers him as a sinner who handed Jesus over to be crucified. Why did this happen to him? It was because he did not act based on the truth, compromising with injustice for his own human interest and ambition. He pursued success in the world at the cost of justice and his conscience as a judge. However, he was dismissed later from his office by the Roman emperor and committed suicide, according

to the church historian Eusebius. The life of Pilate is clearly contrasted with the life of Jesus who lived and died for the truth. Jesus never compromised with injustice and falsehood during his life. He died on the cross; however, he rose from the dead and became the King of kings and Lord of lords. How do you want that your life to be recorded in human history or in the memory of your family? Do you want others to remember you as a coward who did not live based on the truth or as a just person who lived by the truth? I pray that we can live by faith following the truth of Jesus.

Why was Jesus tried and condemned to death in an unjust and illegal way? The Jewish religious leaders and Pontius Pilate sat on the judge's seats to try and condemn Jesus. This image of justice is totally wrong because Jesus is the true Judge who will try and condemn sinners like the Jewish religious leaders and Pontius Pilate. C. S. Lewis, in his book titled *God In The Dock*, claims: *"The ancient man approached God (or even the gods) as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man the roles are reversed. He is the judge: God is in the dock. He is quite a kindly judge: if God should have a reasonable defense for being the god who permits war, poverty and disease, he is ready to listen to it. The trial may even end in God's acquittal. But the important thing is that Man is on the Bench and God in the Dock."* How much have we judged God and Jesus with our own philosophy, ethics, science, and logic!

But Jesus was tried and condemned to forgive our sins such as pride, immorality, injustice, lies, rebellion, hypocrisy, etc. on the cross. Jesus was tried and condemned in our place. Romans 8:1-2 say, ***"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."*** If we believe in Jesus who tried and condemned in our place, there is no more condemnation for us. Many people suffer from self-condemnation. A college girl was violated and got pregnant. She gave birth to a daughter. But whenever she saw her daughter, she condemned herself. She suffered a lot, and nobody could comfort her. But when she realized that Jesus had been tried, condemned, suffered, and died on the cross and accepted Jesus as her Savior, she got freed from self-condemnation. She received joy and peace from heaven and became a faithful disciple of Jesus. Later, she became a missionary to preach the gospel of Jesus to those who suffer from the condemnation of sin and death. Jesus who was tried and condemned in our place has power to set us free from all kinds of condemnation. Praise Jesus who released us from the eternal condemnation through his suffering and death on the cross! May God have mercy on each of us to deeply accept Jesus who was tried and condemned for our sins, so that we may not be condemned but saved and forgiven of our sins. Amen!