

MARCH 29, 2020

The religious and civil trials of Jesus

Once Jesus is arrested, he is taken into various trials to attempt his conviction. As you step into these two scenes, remember what drove the Jewish leaders to this moment. For all the wonder, miracles, and truth Jesus brought into his community, they saw him as a threat. They called his claims “blasphemy” and could not see him for who he was. Before the civil leaders, they appealed to Pilate’s responsibility to quell treason and rebellion. For either trial, those who *could* stand as eyewitnesses of his majesty were nowhere to be found.

- What was the question of the Jewish leaders about Jesus’s identity? (14:61)
- In Jesus’s response to the Council, he offers two claims: (1) “I am” and (2) “and you shall see the Son of Man...”
 1. Jesus may have been saying a simple affirmation of this own claim. But what else might those two words mean to his accusers? (See Exodus 3:14)
 2. He then quotes a prophecy from the Book of Daniel. If you read Daniel 7:13-14, what other claims could Jesus be making?
- What was the question asked by Pilate? (15:2) In a Roman-occupied territory (with an emperor), what would the charge be if Jesus claimed to be a King?
- Why do you think Jesus remained silent? (14:61 and 15:5)
- Where were Jesus’s allies – who could refute the false testimonies? (14:54)
- Who was Barabbas and why were the people calling for his release (instead of Jesus)? (15:7)
- Pilate appears passive and weak as he was manipulated by the priest “because of envy” – and he knew it. (14:10) What is the conundrum for Pilate? What could happen if he released Jesus?
- **Apply it.** How do you believe *and defend* Jesus’s identity before others? What claim does Jesus make that is hard for you to accept?

⁵³ They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes *gathered together. ⁵⁴ Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire. ⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. ⁵⁶ For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. ⁵⁷ Some stood up and began to give false testimony against Him, saying, ⁵⁸ “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’” ⁵⁹ Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent. ⁶⁰ The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” ⁶¹ But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” ⁶² And Jesus said, “I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.” ⁶³ Tearing his clothes, the high priest *said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? ⁶⁴ You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?” And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. ⁶⁵ Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, “Prophecy!” And the officers received Him with slaps in the face.

^{15:1} Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate. ² Pilate questioned Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And He *answered him, “It is as you say.” ³ The chief priests began to accuse Him harshly. ⁴ Then Pilate questioned Him again, saying, “Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!” ⁵ But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.

⁶ Now at the feast he used to release for them any one prisoner whom they requested. ⁷ The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection. ⁸ The crowd went up and began asking him to do as he had been accustomed to do for them. ⁹ Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” ¹⁰ For he was aware that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas for them instead.