

## Jesus before the Sanhedrin

Mark 14: 53-65

Jesus has now been betrayed by Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane and is led away to stand trial before the Sanhedrin. Our text deals with the mock trial, standing before the council of the Pharisees. John's gospel records that Jesus stood before Annas, father in law to Caiaphas the high priest, before He stood before the whole council, but we have little detail of that encounter.

During the proceedings of this mock trial, Jesus will be falsely accused and condemned to death by those He came to save. He will be denied and rejected of the Jewish elite, the ranking religious council. The attitudes present that faithful night remain among many today. Let's take a few moments to consider the [incidents](#) recorded as we think on: [Jesus before the Sanhedrin](#).

**I. The Procession to the Trial** (53-54) – Here we discover the details of Jesus being led away from the Garden of Gethsemane to stand before His accusers. Notice:

**A. The Council** (53) – [And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes](#). This was not a gathering of insignificant men with little influence who brought accusation against Jesus. These were the religious elite; the chief priest was there along with the elders and the scribes. The Sanhedrin was comprised of 70 men plus the high priest. We don't have a list of specific names, but these men were held in high regard by the people and their decisions bore great influence among the Jews. Those who should've known the Scriptures and recognized Jesus as the Christ have gathered to cast their voices against Him.

**B. The Conspiracy** (53) – These men had not met by coincidence. This meeting had been arranged with the intent of finding Jesus guilty of crimes worthy of death and condemning Him. We know they had conspired with Judas to betray Jesus, but this meeting had been planned for some time. [John 18:14 – Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people](#). Jesus was hated by the Sanhedrin and they had conspired against Him in order to condemn Him. Nicodemus was among the Sanhedrin, and some believe Joseph of Arimathaea was as well, but with the exception of these two, the rest appeared to have conspired against Jesus and consented to His death.

**C. The Compromise** (54) – [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](#). We will examine the denial of Peter in our

next study, but here we discover he followed the procession toward the high priest's palace, keeping his distance. At the time Jesus needed a friend most, those who were closest to Him had abandoned Him as well. Peter was concerned and curious, but he was also fearful and afraid.

- This reveals that Peter had fallen away spiritually, following afar off. He sits by the fire of denial, keeping company with those who despised Jesus. We are often critical of Peter, but I'm sure we too have found ourselves distant from the Lord as well. There have even been times when we have denied our Lord. This is a tragic place to be!

**II. The Proceedings in the Trial** (55-59) – Here Mark records the actual proceedings that took place in this mock trial. Notice:

**A. The Approach** (55) – *And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.* Clearly they were determined to present evidence that would condemn Jesus to death, even if it had to be fabricated. They knew He had committed nothing worthy of death, but they were willing to present blatant lies if necessary. These men would not rest until the council consented to the death of Jesus. They were not interested in truth.

**B. The Animosity** (56) – *For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.* Keep in mind, an innocent Man's life was hanging in the balance, but their hatred for Jesus was so strong that they were willing to make up lies in an effort to condemn Him. The lies were so varied and preposterous that they didn't even agree with other accounts, but they kept coming. They were determined to silence the voice and influence of Jesus.

- Sadly this continues in our day as well. People ignore the truth concerning Jesus. They refuse to look to Him regardless of His presence and power in their lives. One can identify with God or any number of other gods, but there is a determined hatred for Jesus.

**C. The Argument** (57-59) – *And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, <sup>[58]</sup> 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. <sup>[59]</sup> But neither so did their witness agree together.* These had not understood the spiritual implications with which Jesus spoke. He was speaking of His coming resurrection, but this was all they had. "This man claimed to be able to do in three days what it took others years to accomplish." Even if they didn't believe Jesus was the Christ, thinking He was a lunatic, was such an offence worthy of death? Their arguments prove their determination to condemn Jesus, but even these arguments did not agree.

**III. The Panic during the Trial (60-61)** – As the trial progressed, Caiaphas the high priest began to panic. Consider:

**A. The Temper of Caiaphas (60)** – *And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?* Jesus stood silent in the face of his accusers. As of yet there had been no evidence given to render a guilty verdict worthy of death. Caiaphas was eager to condemn Jesus and determined to obtain a verdict worthy of death. He became enraged at the progress of the trial, taunting Jesus to speak in His defense.

- Is that not how many respond today when confronted with the absolute truth of Jesus? Many have already made up their minds concerning Him and become angry when they are forced to examine the truth He reveals. Conviction creates anger in the hearts of many.

**B. The Tactics of Caiaphas (61)** – *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?* Caiaphas never believed Jesus was the Christ. In fact, he was outraged at such a claim. However, he knew Jesus professed to be the Christ, the promised Messiah. Desperate for a conviction, Caiaphas urged Jesus to publicly proclaim His deity so He could be charged with blasphemy. Having no credible witness against Jesus, Caiaphas sought to have Jesus incriminate Himself.

**IV. The Pinnacle of the Trial (62-65)** – Following the questioning by Caiaphas, we come to the climax of the proceedings. Consider:

**A. The Confirmation of Christ (62)** – *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 publicly proclaimed His deity by identifying Himself as the Son of the living God. He identified Himself as the I AM, known to the Jews as Jehovah God. Jesus publicly proclaimed He was in fact God in the flesh! The Sanhedrin thought they were in control of the destiny of this man they considered a criminal worthy of death, but Jesus revealed He was the sovereign God of power and authority!

- It is interesting to note that Jesus also makes a profound statement about the future. Knowing they would deny Him and sentence Him to death, Jesus proclaims that His death would not be the end. He will rise from the grave, triumphant over death, ascend back to the Father, and return in power and great glory at a time appointed in the future! These would cast their voices against Jesus in judgment, but He will return to earth as the righteous Judge.

**B. The Condemnation of the Crowd** (63-64) – Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? <sup>[64]</sup> Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. Following the proclamation of Jesus, Caiaphas became enraged and called for a vote. The Sanhedrin cast their voices against Jesus, declaring Him to be guilty of death. They had heard all they needed to hear. They were determined to rid Jerusalem of the Man who claimed to be the Christ.

- There is an aspect we need to consider. Mark reveals that Caiaphas rent his clothes. We might not think much of that, but according to the Mosaic Law, the high priest was forbidden to uncover his head or rend his garments. In a fit of rage, Caiaphas disqualified himself from the priesthood before the Great High Priest. According to the Law, he was no longer worthy to carry out the duties of high priest. Jesus would fulfill the righteous demands of God as He shed His own blood on the cross and presented it to God to atone for the sin of mankind! Caiaphas didn't realize it, but the office of high priest would no longer be necessary upon earth. Jesus would ascend back to Father where He stands as our Great High Priest, making intercession for us.

**C. The Cruelness of the Council** (65) – 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. The suffering and agony was just beginning for our Lord as those who should have embraced Him began to abuse Him physically and emotionally. He would endure much more in the coming hours on our behalf, but the pain and suffering had begun.

- This is difficult to consider and even angers us as we read of our Lord's treatment by the religious Jews, but we must remember that the situation had not gotten out of control. It is undeniable that a great injustice had been committed. An innocent Man, the Son of God was condemned by false accusation, but this was all within the will of God. Jesus willfully submitted to this mock trial and will submit to the death of the cross. *Isaiah 50:6 – I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.* 1 Pet.2:23 – *Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

**Conclusion:** We cannot begin to imagine the agony and suffering our Lord endured. The sinless Son of God willingly submitted to the death of the cross on our behalf. As He stood before His accusers, He knew He would be condemned to death. He endured all of that for us. He bore our sin and our shame, suffering the righteous judgment of God in His body so we wouldn't have to. Sadly, many present on that faithful night denied Jesus and rejected Him as the Christ. What about you? What decision have you reached concerning Jesus? Have you received Him as the Christ, the Lord and Savior? If not I urge you to do so!