

Mark 14:53-72 ~ Scripture Verses

Before the Sanhedrin

⁵³ They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together. ⁵⁴ Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.

⁵⁵ The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. ⁵⁶ Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

⁵⁷ Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: ⁵⁸ “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.’” ⁵⁹ Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

⁶⁰ Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” ⁶¹ But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”

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.”

⁶³ The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. ⁶⁴ “You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”

They all condemned him as worthy of death. ⁶⁵ Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, “Prophecy!” And the guards took him and beat him.

Peter Disowns Jesus

⁶⁶ While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. ⁶⁷ When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him.

“You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus,” she said.

⁶⁸ But he denied it. “I don’t know or understand what you’re talking about,” he said, and went out into the entryway.

⁶⁹ When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, “This fellow is one of them.” ⁷⁰ Again he denied it.

After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.”

⁷¹ He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about.”

⁷² Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times.” And he broke down and wept.

Mark 14:53-72 ~ Discussion Questions

Jesus' trials took place in two stages: a Jewish (religious) trial and a Roman (civil) trial, each of which had three episodes.

Jewish (Religious) Trials

Preliminary hearing before Annas, the former high priest.	John 18:12-14, 19-23
Trial before Caiaphas, the ruling high priest and the Sanhedrin.	Mark 14:53-65, Matthew 26:57-68, Luke 22:54-65
Final action of the Sanhedrin	Mark 15:1, Matthew 27:1, Luke 22:66-71

Roman (Civil) Trials

Trial before Pontius Pilate	Mark 15:2-5, Matt 27:11-26, Luke 23:1-5, John 18:28-38
Trial before Herod Antipas	Luke 23:6-12
Trial before Pilate continued and concluded	Mark 15:6-15, John 18:39-19:6

1. Wouldn't it be easier if the story was all in one place instead of having to bounce around through all four Gospels to get all the details? Why is it like this?
2. Who made up the Sanhedrin? How many members did it have? The Romans gave the Sanhedrin a great deal of authority except to do what?
3. Jewish trials were very different than trials today: no prosecutor, no defense attorney; only the presiding officer (like a judge) and members of the Sanhedrin (like a jury). How many witnesses were necessary for a verdict? (Deut 17:6)
4. Why did the Sanhedrin have such a difficult time convicting Jesus? (14:55-59) Why did they have such trouble finding what Jesus had done wrong?
5. What is the temple to which Jesus referred in 14:58? (John 2:19)
6. How did Jesus use silence in all the testimony against him? What did the high priest finally do in attempt to speed up the trial? (14:61, Isaiah 53:7) How did Jesus answer the question?

7. Why is “I am” such a powerful answer? (Exodus 3:13-15) Jesus used the term seven times previously. What are the seven “I am’s?”

John 6:35 _____

John 8:12, 9:5 _____

John 10:7-9 _____

John 10:11, 14 _____

John 11:25 _____

John 14:6 _____

John 15:1-5 _____

8. In Mark 14:62, Jesus applies a portion of two Old Testament scriptures, Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13, to himself. What was he claiming by quoting these verses?

9. What is the meaning of *blasphemy*? What was the punishment that God gave Moses to give to the Jews for blasphemy? (Leviticus 24:13-16, Mark 2:7, 3:28-29)

10. Let’s think about Peter for a minute. He gets into a lot of trouble. He argued with Jesus (Mark 14:31), disobeyed Jesus when he fell asleep (14:37), used his sword to cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant (14:47, John 18:10), denies Jesus three times (14:66-72), and yet after all of that Jesus essentially makes him the head of the new church (Matthew 16:18, John 21:15-17). Why? How are you like Peter? How are you not like Peter? Who are you most like: Peter? Matthew? Luke? John? Paul? David? Solomon? Abraham?

11. What does the story about Peter (Mark 14:66-72) tell you about Peter? What does it tell you about human nature? What would you have done if you were questioned in the courtyard where Jesus was being tried and beaten?

12 Why are Christians sometimes afraid or reluctant to identify themselves as believers in Christ? What sort of situations make you uncomfortable or fearful about identifying with Christ or Christianity?

13. *Remorse* means a gnawing distress arising from a sense of guilt for past wrongs. *Repent* means to turn away from past wrongs and attempt to change your life. When you mess up, are you more likely to be remorseful or repentant? What is God looking for in you?

Mark 14:53-72 ~ Leader's Guide

1. Wouldn't it be easier if the story was all in one place instead of having to bounce around through all four Gospels to get all the details? Why is it like this?

Sure, it would be easier, but not nearly as illuminating. Mark wrote an action-packed abbreviated gospel for gentile readers in Rome. Matthew's gospel, 20 years later, was aimed at Greek-speaking Jews. Luke's gospel was written to a specific person, Theophilus, and was intended to instruct him and others and to strengthen the faith of believers. The first three are synoptic gospels whereas John's gospel is a theological one for a potentially broader audience. So each one give us the part of the story most relevant to their readers (or listeners).

2. Who made up the Sanhedrin? How many members did it have? The Romans gave the Sanhedrin a great deal of authority except to do what?

The Sanhedrin is the high court of the Jews composed of chief priests, elders, and teachers of the law. It included members of the two major sects: Pharisees and Sadducees, but probably not any Essenes or Zealots, who tended to live in more isolated places. It had 71 members including the high priest, who was the presiding officer. Under Roman jurisdiction, the Sanhedrin was given a great deal of authority, however they could not impose capital punishment.

3. Jewish trials were very different than trials today: no prosecutor, no defense attorney; only the presiding officer (like a judge) and members of the Sanhedrin (like a jury). How many witnesses were necessary for a verdict? (Deut 17:6)

In Jewish judicial procedure, witnesses functioned as the prosecution, however at least two or three witnesses must agree in deciding major cases and to impose the death penalty (which, as noted above, they could no longer do).

4. Why did the Sanhedrin have such a difficult time convicting Jesus? (14:55-59) Why did they have such trouble finding what Jesus had done wrong?

The testimony of the witnesses did not agree. It didn't agree, of course, because it was false testimony.

5. What is the temple to which Jesus referred in 14:58? (John 2:19)

The Jews thought Jesus was referring to the literal temple, but John 2:21 tells us he was not; he was referring to himself.

John 2:20-21 – ²⁰ The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this

temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?”²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

6. How did Jesus use silence in all the testimony against him? What did the high priest finally do in attempt to speed up the trial? (14:61, Isaiah 53:7) How did Jesus answer the question?

Jesus remained silent as it was prophesied by Isaiah.

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 her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

The high priest finally asked him directly, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” Jesus answered by simply stating, “I am,” and then he added, “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

7. Why is “I am” such a powerful answer? (Exodus 3:13-15) Jesus used the term seven times previously. What are the seven “I am’s?”

Exodus 3:13-15 – ¹³ Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

John 6:35 I am the bread of life

John 8:12, 9:5 I am the light of the world

John 10:7-9 I am the gate

John 10:11, 14 I am the good shepherd

John 11:25 I am the resurrection and the life

John 14:6 I am the way, the truth, and the light

John 15:1-5 I am the true vine

8. In Mark 14:62, Jesus applies a portion of two Old Testament scriptures, Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13, to himself. What was he claiming by quoting these verses?

Psalm 110:1 – The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

Daniel 7:13 – “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.”

Jesus was essentially claiming total equality with God. That’s why the high priest then said, “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. ⁶⁴ “You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”

9. What is the meaning of *blasphemy*? What was the punishment that God gave Moses to give to the Jews for blasphemy? (Leviticus 24:13-16, Mark 2:7, 3:28-29)

Blasphemy not only involved reviling the name of God but also included any affront to his majesty or authority. Jesus claim to be the Messiah and, in fact to have majesty and authority belonging only to God was therefore regarded by Caiaphas as blasphemy, for which the law of Moses prescribed death by stoning.

Leviticus 24:13-16 – ¹³ Then the LORD said to Moses: ¹⁴ “Take the blasphemer outside the camp. All those who heard him are to lay their hands on his head, and the entire assembly is to stone him. ¹⁵ Say to the Israelites: ‘If anyone curses his God, he will be held responsible; ¹⁶ anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him. Whether an alien or native-born, when he blasphemes the Name, he must be put to death.

When a bull is to be slaughtered as a sin offering, the elders of the community lay their hands on it (Lev 4:15, 8:14) and so the mention of this ritual here brings up a frightful image of what is to come for the man who cursed, and it emphasizes the unusual solemnity of this execution for the crime of cursing God.

In addition, the scripture in Leviticus notes that this law and punishment apply equally to a citizen and an alien. Some laws of Moses, especially dealing with worship and ritual apply only to Jews, but this law applies to all: *no one* is to blaspheme the name of the LORD and all will be punished for doing so. Actually, most of the crimes in this section of Leviticus are said to apply to both the alien and the citizen, i.e., the equivalence of justice to all.

Mark 2:5-7 – ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

⁶ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷ “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Mark 3:28-29 – ²⁸I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. ²⁹But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.”

10. Let’s think about Peter for a minute. He gets into a lot of trouble. He argued with Jesus (Mark 14:31), disobeyed Jesus when he fell asleep (14:37), used his sword to cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant (14:47, John 18:10), denied Jesus three times (14:66-72), and yet after all of that Jesus essentially makes him the head of the new church (Matthew 16:18, John 21:15-17). Why? How are you like Peter? How are you not like Peter? Who are you most like: Peter? Matthew? Luke? John? Paul? David? Solomon? Abraham?

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The word *remorse* appears only once in the Bible and it is speaking of Judas.

Matthew 27:3 – When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders.

The word *repent*, on the other hand, appears more than 75 times. We may be remorseful about our sins, but clearly God is calling us to repent.