

## Transcription of 17ID1948

Mark 15:1

"The Religious Trials Come To An End"

May 21, 2017

Let's open our Bibles this morning to Mark 15:1. And if you have found that, if you could put your marker somewhere in Luke 22, beginning in verse 66, we're going to be turning there as well this morning. So Mark 15:1, Luke 22:66.

We're continuing through Mark's gospel as Mark lays out for us the trials that Jesus faced. We've mentioned to you a couple of times that there were three religious trials that the Lord faced during the night once arrested there at the Garden of Gethsemane; and then quickly in the morning, three trials before the Roman authorities - both Pilate and Herod and then back to Pilate. So the Lord will be crucified by 9:00 in the morning and be on the cross until 3:00 in the afternoon.

I think most people, whether they are saved or maybe they just have been in church all of their lives, maybe they're living even on the fringes spiritually, would understand or know much of the studies that we are looking at because it is presented in such detail in the gospels. There's lots of real estate, I guess, literarily speaking, devoted to this suffering of Jesus because it really is the height and the reason why He came. In fact, in the story itself - as you read about these religious men going after Jesus with such vehemence - it is for that very sin that the Lord came to save. So the very reasons that He suffered, in many ways, is the proof of why He needed to come at all.

We looked at the first couple of trials two Sundays ago. We looked at Peter last week. And the report of the third trial is really found in one verse in Mark; notice in verse 1, it says, "Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate." So, Mark really just takes us forward. Luke gives to us, in chapter 22, what took place at that early-morning meeting, the third meeting for the religious folks, this time to formalize their charges against the Lord.

There are some terms that you have probably heard before. The Torah. The word means love, but it is normally used to refer to the first five books of the Old Testament that Moses wrote, the Torah. The entire Old Testament, to the Jews, is called the Tanakh; and the Tanakh is the Old Testament. The Torah is found

within, if you will, the Tanakh. But there is also the oral law that was written down over generations as it was orally passed down first. It was codified, if you will, at some point, and it contains rabbinical opinions and rulings and commentary on the Scriptures, philosophy and ceremony and thoughts about God and all, and it was called the Mishnah. The Mishnah has sixty-three really big volumes; but thirty-eight of them are dedicated to rabbinical teachings on the Bible, and those are called the Talmud. So in the Mishnah, the oral presentation of law, within them there are thirty-eight volumes that are just dedicated to essays that speak about oral law.

I bring that up because in the Mishnah, the oral law passed down, there are eighteen rules written down - and they've been there for generations - on how trials should be handled or how a judgment of a person for a capital crime could be dealt with. And these wicked religious rulers set every one of them eighteen aside. In order to accomplish their religious whim, they ignored their own law. They set aside everything that they knew and counted as dear, believed God had directed in the Old Testament, and yet found that they could set them aside for their own purposes. They had trials at night - that was illegal. They had a trial on the Sabbath - that was illegal. You couldn't have it during a religious festival which Passover obviously was. You couldn't have a private trial, ever; it had to be public, it had to be open to the public. It was not. No accused person could be coerced into testifying against themselves. Witnesses had to be accurate and verifiable - they were not - to establish innocence or guilt. You couldn't sentence someone on the day that you tried them, nor could you - after declaring your sentence - sentence them on that same day. It had to wait and had to be reviewed and could be challenged. So all of the oral laws established in the culture itself, the Sanhedrin decided they weren't following.

The priests (here in verse 1), the elders, the council itself - they counseled together, they consulted together; but in every step this is a charade, this is illegitimate. And it always comes down to this one issue - they wanted Him dead because of who He was. It really comes down to Jesus said He was God come to save. It is the issue whereby men and women die eternally today. It's the decision you have to make. And it is the challenge that they faced. These folks so hated Jesus that they were determined to kill Him at all cost. But if you look at the trials, it drags back to those issues. He said He was God. He said He was the Messiah. He exposed them publicly. He pointed out they were religious charlatans. It infuriated them, so much so that they were willing to bend their own rules and

break them entirely just to get rid of Him. And so this third meeting, much like the first two - one before Annas and one before Caiaphas, was meant just to determine how they might best challenge who He was and find charges against Him that would move Rome's hand against Jesus to put Him to death. The Jews, when they had been occupied by the Romans, had lost the ability for self-determination. They could sentence Him to death, but they couldn't do anything about it. They could condemn Him, but they couldn't act upon it; not legally so. So, Rome would have to join in.

By the time that we get to Pilate next week (and Herod), Pilate's a very weak and kind of vacillating guy. He was in trouble with the Jews from the day he was assigned to the job. He did some things that were really foolish and undermining to his own power. The Jews had great control over Pilate in the fact that he had been reprimanded for his behavior time and again out of Rome. That wasn't a place you wanted to be at. By the time Herod sees Him, although he had listened to John the Baptist and listened to the testimony of Jesus willingly, by this time, Herod's heart is just closed; he doesn't want anything to do with Jesus other than to see a trick that He might do, a miracle that He might perform.

So when the Lord was arrested in Gethsemane, and they took Him to Caiaphas first - who was kind of the godfather, although Rome didn't like him - everything was about interrogation. "Let's try to get something on Him." His meeting with Annas, there in the palace that he and his son-in-law Caiaphas both lived in, is recorded in John 18. Caiaphas really didn't get much of anywhere with Jesus. He asked about His disciples. Jesus refused to answer. He asked Him about His doctrine, and Jesus said, "Go interview people. That's the way trials work. Bring them in here. I didn't have secret meetings. I preached in public. They'll tell you what I said." And He was slapped in the face for it, for being disrespectful. And Jesus challenged them, "Why are you hitting Me? What have I said that was wrong?" When they took Him to Caiaphas, which Mark records here beginning in verse 53 (chapter 14), most of the Sanhedrin members, it seems, were there. Caiaphas tried a different tactic. He brought in, in the middle of the night, all kinds of witnesses, but none of them could agree. It looked like a joke. Finally he asked Jesus about who He was, and it got down to this issue. "Are You God? Are You the Messiah? Are you God?" (Jesus had said that back in John 10 and many other places as well). And Jesus doesn't hesitate to say to him what He had said to the nation on the Feast of Dedication earlier, "I am," and it led to a brutal beating at the hands of these religious leaders. They didn't like what they heard. It angered

them. And while Peter stood down in the courtyard, they beat Jesus and mocked Him and played blind man's bluff with Him and covered His face and slapped Him in the head. And down below Peter (we talked about him last week) was standing, though he had made great promise to the Lord, was denying the Lord as he tried to follow Him, if you will, from afar off. He didn't listen to Jesus' warnings. He didn't listen to the word. He stood in the world, trying to get warm and trying to fit in, and it was a failure. Peter would have to wait until the resurrection to feel better. But he would, which brings us to this verse here, in verse 1 of chapter 15, because this is sometime before dawn. We read "in the morning," and in all of the accounts, it does seem to be in that 3:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. time slot, if you will. The Jews thought they could manipulate Pilate all right, but they needed to find something to charge Him with. I remember hearing, years ago, an old saying that says, "If you can't find a lawyer who knows the law, find a lawyer who knows the judge." And I think that's exactly what these guys thought that they could do - they could take care of Pilate if they could just formulate some kind of charges.

So we read here in verse 1 that Jesus is ushered in again at the early morning hours, beaten and bloodied and weary but ready. And the meeting was designed for only one thing. "Let's get rid of this Jesus. Find a reason not to believe in Him, not to follow Him, not to trust in Him, not to bow to Him. Let's just get rid of Him!" And their charge, that they had come up with during the night, was that He was a blasphemer; He claimed to be God. But to the Romans, they could have cared less about that because they had a million different gods; they'd have to do a lot better than that. So this hurried meeting - notice everyone is showing up on the Passover, on one of the holiest days of the year for the people themselves celebrating God's deliverance from Egypt - and here they're plotting, and they're all in it together. But they came up with an idea. "Let's twist the blaspheming to just: He claims to be a king, He tells people not to pay taxes, He wants folks to follow Him, He wants to be a king that could replace Caesar." They changed blasphemy to treason, and Rome, by history anyway, killed thousands of people a year because they were enemies of the state. And if you stood against the state, you didn't stand for very long. You will read (in Luke 23:2) that they stood before Pilate (in a little while), and they said, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King," inviting people to follow Him. So that's what they came up with, if you will, at this last meeting. But that's the hatred against Jesus. And I should say that is probably the hatred that you'll find in the world at some point. If you're going to go out and share the goodness of God, the response of the world is often the same

- against the gospel of Jesus. It isn't an easy place to live; it isn't an easy way to live; it isn't supposed to be. It wasn't for Jesus. Jesus said, "If they hated Me, know they're going to hate you" (John 15:18).

When, in the 1800's, William Booth began The Christian Society with, really, the intention of just helping the poor folks on the east side of the slums of London, his desire was, "This'll be a great way to bring the gospel to the poor." And the minute he began to have their meetings, and they bought tents and they set them up in fields, there were these thugs who plagued them constantly. The tents were burned down. In the midst of meetings, bricks would fly, and the meetings were disrupted. I think it was in 1865 that William Booth said to his organization, "We're at war. We're at war. The outreach that God has given us to bring good news to the poor who need to hear about Jesus, is violently opposed to us." And it was in 1865 that The Christian Society changed their name to The Salvation Army. But his idea was, "We're at war." So he became General William Booth, and that general status and that pecking order is still around in the organization. But in 1889, when they incorporated and they organized in a way that was recognizable, almost 700 of their men were killed or maimed or hurt or taken out and left that way for life, just for preaching the gospel. "You're at war." That's what he said to the people.

Jesus shows us the same thing. He came to just proclaim life, and they wanted Him dead. Paul will write to Timothy (in his last letter), "If you want to live a godly life in Christ, you're going to suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). So, this whole travesty of justice that we read about, the Lord was willing to go through. But understand, if you read church history, the minute Jesus dies, and the church is born, the church begins to face the same thing He did. Right? First from the local religious leadership, eventually to ten very long rounds of persecution - they call them "pogroms" - from the Romans, from Nero to Diocletian, six million church believers killed in 300 years or so, just for preaching the gospel.

We have it a lot easier today, don't we? You don't have to say anything if you don't want to. Well you should. But the church has lost a lot of its influence because it has run away from the war. So here's the depth of wickedness, though, that people can go to. These are the religious folks. Every person you read in verse 1 here - their job is religious. They're elders and priests and councils that have great power. In fact, Jesus was a threat to their power, and they would do anything to hang on to it. Jesus was a threat to their expectation. They wanted marching

armies and banners to defeat Rome. They didn't want some peasant king. And Jesus was the One who exposed their sin; He showed them who they were. When He cleansed the temple, they were angry. But He said, "You're a bunch of thieves." In John 15:25, Jesus said to them, "You have hated Me without a cause. You have no reason to hate Me at all, but you do" (because of His words, because of the conviction that came with them). His holiness convicted them constantly. It's the same today. Don't think you're not at war; you are. This is not your home. This is not your home. This a place to do ministry, to reach out, to bring people with you. And then you go home.

I remember, years ago, hearing of that chieftain in east Africa who visited a missions station for the first time, and there were tents set up, and he walked in with some of his men, and he saw a mirror hanging outside a tent. And he looked at it, and when he saw his own reflection, he said to the missionaries, "What horrible looking person is that?" and they said, "That's you." And so he bought the mirror, and he threw it to the ground, and he said, "You will never make that ugly face to me again." It's kind of what they were doing to Jesus. The religious establishment wanted to dash the mirror of their souls. Right? You walk around in this life, and you're a mirror to the people that you meet - as a Christian. They're convicted because your commitment is real, it's genuine; and they would rather destroy your testimony than turn to the answer for their lives.

So they plot to kill Jesus, but (even that) it only magnifies their sinfulness. It makes it even clearer. I read years ago, there was a fellow named William Temple. He was an archbishop, actually. But he wrote, "The world doesn't hate angels for being angelic; it hates men for being Christians. They're begrudging your new character, they're tormented by your peace, they're infuriated by your joy. They don't like what they see." And they certainly didn't like it in Jesus.

Well those are the two basic issues. In fact, if you'll turn over to Luke 22 with me (since Mark only gives us a comment about the meeting), the two issues are pretty clear. They are brought up at this meeting, at the last meeting before Jesus went to Pilate, and the first question was, "Are You the Messiah, the Christ?" The second question is, "Are You God? Are You the Son of God?"

Verse 66 says, "As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into the council, saying, 'If You are the Christ, tell us.' But He said to them, 'If I tell you, you will by no means believe.

And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go. Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.' " Jesus' first response to this third meeting (and remember, Caiaphas had asked Him that question already) was to say to them, "You're not going to listen anyway." "Are You the Christ?" "Yes, I am." That's exactly what He had responded to Caiaphas. So the question is now brought up in the full council, if you will, and Jesus said, "Your minds are already made up. You have no interest in justice. You certainly would never let Me go." He wasn't leaving anyway, but He wants them to know He knows. These unbelieving hearts were futile to preach to because their minds had been made up. He'd been testifying for three and a half years of who He was and why He'd come.

You remember when He had cleansed the temple (just the week earlier) for the second time with the merchants and all and the money changers; that when they came and questioned Him (in our study in Mark 11) by whose authority Jesus did that, He said (in that second time), " 'I'll ask you a question, and then I'll answer yours. Tell Me about John the Baptist. Was He a man of God or not? Was he someone God sent, or did he just come on his own?' " And they got in a huddle, and they said, "We can't answer that because if we say he came from God, then He's going to tell us we should listen to him; and he said of Him that He's the Messiah. If we say he's not from God, then we're going to be in trouble with the people because they like him, and they admire him. We're going to lose public favor." And they came back, and they said, "We don't know. We can't answer." And Jesus said, "Good. Then I'm not going to answer you." And the Lord brought that up here in this third trial as well. He said, "If I ask You a question, you're not going to answer. You know where you stand. You know the truth. You're just not willing to act upon it. So Me answering that question won't help you at all. You've made up your minds." Later on in that same portion (there in Mark 12), the Lord had tried to help them see their ways, and He (you might remember) had a conversation with them, and He said to them, " 'Why do the scribes say that the Christ, the Messiah, would be the Son of David?' " and He quoted out of Psalm 110. And He calls them to task on their own Scriptures. And they said, " 'Well, that's because He is going to be the son of David.' " And Jesus said, " 'Well, you read the rest of the psalm, David calls Him his Lord. So how can He be his Son and also his Lord? That doesn't work, unless He is indeed the Lord.' " And Jesus took them through the study of Psalm 110 in the hopes that they would understand that He was God, and rather than responding in kind or in belief, they turned away from Him. They refused His wisdom, and yet you read there in that same Mark 12 passage that "the common

people heard Him gladly" (verse 37). It's why there aren't a lot of wise and powerful folks in the church - because God is interested in the hearts, and the hearts of those who are lonely and lowly and open and willing to hear will come, and they do. The common people - they were fine with Jesus; but these folks who should have known better - they weren't.

Two and a half years earlier, at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16), Peter had responded to the question that Jesus posed to His disciples. "Who do you think I am? Who do you say that I am?" And when Peter stood up, and he said, "You are the Messiah, You're the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus said, "You got that from heaven. That's an understanding that doesn't just come through mental gymnastics. That's revelation knowledge. God showed you that, Peter. It's an understanding that you have to receive from the Father."

When Jesus had made a trip into Bethany just a couple of weeks or months before (at the urgent request of Mary and Martha) because Lazarus was sick and then eventually died, when Martha came and confronted Him as to why He hadn't come earlier (before he had died), Jesus loved this woman (John tells us), but He said to her, there in John 11:25, "Martha, I am the resurrection and the life. If you believe in Me, even if you die, you're going to live. And if you live and believe in Me, you'll never die. Martha, do you believe that?" And Martha, without hesitation, said, "Yes, Lord, I believe You are the Messiah. You're the Christ, the Son of God who is to come into the world." That was the issue. It's still the issue. Is He the Savior? Is He God? Should we believe in Him or not? Do we need to follow Him?

Early on in Jesus' public ministry, at an evening service in the house of Peter (there in Capernaum), you'll read in Luke 4, that many demons were delivered from folks who had lived in the city; and as they came out of these men and women, they came out, and they began to scream out (these devils), "You are the Christ. You're the Messiah. You're the Son of God." And Jesus, at that point, told them that they couldn't speak anymore because He didn't want the devil doing His work. But it says they knew He was, they understood who He was. It's the same question here.

When Jesus met that woman at the well in Samaria (in John 4), the woman, as Jesus began to uncover her heart, finally softened up a bit, and she said to Jesus, "I know that the Messiah (who is called the Christ) is coming. When He comes, He will tell us all things." And Jesus said, "I who speak to you am He. That's Me. That's who I am." He claimed to be the Messiah. The woman leaves her waterpot

behind, she runs into the city, she says to the folks who will listen, "Come on with me. I want to show you a Man who has told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah? Could this be the Christ?" And when they came out of the city (the Samaritans), and they convinced Jesus to stay with them two days, it says that they began to believe in His word, and they said to this woman, "Now we believe in Him, not because of what you said but because we've met Him, and we know that He is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world." That's the issue. That's the issue even as Jesus heads for the cross, His sacrifice.

When Jesus (in John 9) healed that man that was born blind, remember, and opened his eyes, and then, because He was gone by the time the man could see, the Lord went to find him after he'd been thrown out of the synagogue for speaking about Jesus as being the Lord, Jesus found him there, and He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" And the man said, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe in Him?" And Jesus said, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking to you." And he said, "I believe, I believe." That's the issue.

I mean, it always comes down to that issue. "Are You the Messiah, and are You God?" And notice in verse 68 (Luke 22) Jesus addressed the fact that He had asked them questions, sought to bring them to that understanding, but they had dug in their heels. No amount of information or conviction was going to help them believe Him. And that's usually the battle you fight with people that you share with. They've got arguments to not believe, and they'll dig in, and you pray that the Lord would open their eyes to see. But that's where the battle takes place.

And then they said to Him (verse 70) the other question, " 'Are You then the Son of God? Are You the Messiah? Are You then the Son of God?' " The words Son of God or Son of Man are both Jewish implications that "You are God" (Daniel 7 prophecy that we talked about a couple of weeks ago). So even here, all of them were asking. "They all said, 'Are You the Son of God?' And He said to them, 'Yep, you rightly say that I am, you said it, you got it,' " to which they replied, " 'What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.' " And, "Then the whole multitude arose and led Him to Pilate" (Luke 23:1). So, when they get to Pilate (John 19), you will read in verse 7, " 'We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.' " "He's in trouble with us because He says He's God. He also says He's the Messiah. We don't believe either. We want Him dead." And this is the crux of the issue. Laying everything else aside, this is the problem. Right? There are folks who will

say, "Jesus never claimed to be God or the Messiah in the Bible." Well, if nothing else, just repeat what I just told you. They're only six Scriptures, but there are sixty more just like it. These folks should be reading their Scriptures.

Even the greatest enemies that Jesus had - the Sanhedrin, the Jewish leadership, the folks most threatened in their position - declared, "We have heard it with His own mouth." That's what they said in verse 71 here, "We have heard it ourselves. It came from His own mouth. We've got to take Him to Pilate. We've got to take Him out." Now both Mark and Luke will then jump to that meeting with Pilate, and we will begin with that in verse 2.

There's one thing we should add, at least to our understanding, and that is according to Matthew 27, when Judas sees the decision that the Sanhedrin makes early in the morning (and he's hovering around somewhere), and he realizes that it is their intention to have Jesus killed and bring up these trumped-up charges, it saddened him. In fact, the words in Matthew 27:3 are Judas "was remorseful" over his actions, and he takes the thirty pieces of silver back to the priests and to the elders. And he says, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood, and here's the money back." And they said to him, these religious leaders, "It's really not our problem. That's your problem." And so he throws the money back into the temple, He departs, and then he takes his own life. The word "remorseful" is an interesting word in the Greek because it literally means an emotional sadness over a behavior or a regret over an action, but it doesn't speak about repentance or even sorrow over sin. To Judas, much like someone in prison if you say to them, "Are you sorry?" they'll say, "Yeah, I'm sorry I got caught," and that's pretty much where Judas was coming from. This isn't the outcome Judas wanted. This isn't the plan that he had hoped to push forward. So he doesn't find any forgiveness though he confesses what he did was wrong, and Jesus was innocent. And, again, like a thousand voices around the trials, Jesus is declared innocent everywhere, by everyone that stands around. From Jesus' own lips to Pilate's words to his wife to Herod to the thief on the cross to the Romans standing nearby to this guy Judas, His betrayer. The priests' response to Judas was, "You've served your purpose." The user has been used. And as he throws his money to them, he goes out brooding, and he despairs of life, and he hangs himself; he takes his own life. There's only one other comment to that. It is in Acts 1:18 that tells us that Judas kind of fell down and splattered upon the rocks below. We don't know if he just hung there enough to be kind of bloated up and unable to support his weight or if the rope broke. There's nothing that tells us. It just said he died. He's the only

New Testament suicide that you have. There are no suicides in the Old Testament that are good or by good people, necessarily. I don't believe suicide is the unpardonable sin, although it certainly will cut you off from God's best and cut away from your life that which God had planned. But everyone that commits suicide in the Bible are people that are far away from the Lord, and Judas is no exception. He lines up prophetically with a guy named Ahithophel, who was David's counselor when David's boys tried to overthrow his rule (there in 2 Samuel 16-17). He also hung himself.

So here's the last little word. The hypocrites, the priests who got the money back, gathered it up, put it back in the plate or whatever, and they said, "Well, we really can't use this for godly purposes. Not in the temple where we serve God. This is blood money." What a bunch of crooks these guys were. "So we'll do something charitable. We'll buy a plot of land. We will buy it from a potter." Potters threw broken pieces, shards of pottery, into the land. It wasn't good for anything - way too alkaline - and so you can't grow anything in it, it's too hard to prepare. And so, "We'll just use that as a place to bury strangers in. We'll call it the 'field of blood,' *Aceldama*." It's an Aramaic word. But, "We've done our duty now," and they refused to see Jesus as the Messiah. They refused to believe that He was God. But they're going to do their religious duty like a lot of people today.

So you go through - even the Scriptures we looked at - Peter and Martha and even the demon declared, "Jesus is the Lord." The woman at the well, the fellow who was born blind. Just make the list.

When John finished his gospel, he wrote (towards the end of chapter 20), "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God." That's what it boils down to. Want to go witness to people? That's what you've got to get through to them. There is a Savior who's come. He's the Son of God, and He can give life. It's the decision everyone needs to make. It's the crux of why we have the cross to begin with. It's a message well worth delivering to everyone you care about.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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