JESUS WAS TRIED IN OUR PLACE

Mark 14:53-15:15

Key Verse: 14:61,62

"But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?' '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.'"

Last Sunday we studied about Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Geth­semane in order to obey God's will for world salvation. For this, Jesus had to drink the cup of suffering and die on a cross as the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29). Why did Jesus have to drink the cup of sufferings? It was be­cause God in­tended to save the whole world through his Son's death on the cross and resur­rec­tion. Jesus was ready to drink the cup of suffer­ing. Still, Jesus was over­whelmed with sor­row in his humanness. For Jesus, there was only one way to over­come him­self and fulfill God's mis­sion assigned to him. It was prayer. In order to solve his agony of soul he prayed in the Garden of Geth­semane. Jesus prayed all night, saying, "Abba, Fa­ther...Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will" (36). Luke the physi­cian vividly de­scribed how he prayed. Luke 22:44 says, "And be­ing in anguish, he prayed more earnest­ly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." The title of to­day's passage is, "Je­sus was tried in our place." When we prayer­fully study this passage we can clearly see that Jesus was tried by many. But in the midst of trial Jesus identified himself as the king of the Jews, the Messi­ah who was promised to come. Jesus also declared that he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I. Jesus was tried before the Sanhedrin (14:53-65)

The religious leaders, the agents of the devil, arrested Jesus and took him to the high priest. They were mem­bers of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the rul­ing council of the Jewish nation. Origi­nally, they were chosen people and a priestly nation (Ex 19:6). They were called to teach the Bible to the peoples of all nations so that the world might over­flow with the knowledge of God. But they abandoned God and be­came politicians under the Roman rule.

When God's chosen people turned out to be politicians, abandon­ing God's mission to be Bible teachers, they became the agents of the devil. They should have served Jesus. They should have been servants of God. But they became judges and brought Jesus to the Sanhedrin. They made Jesus kneel down on the ground like a criminal and seventy of them were sitting as judges. They were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. Many testified falsely against Jesus, but their state­ments did not agree. Someone said in verse 58, "We heard him say, 'I will de­stroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.'" At that time, this kind of state­ment was considered blasphemy. Blasphemy was the worst guilt. The high priest asked Jesus, "Do you want to defend yourself?" But verse 61 says, "Jesus remained silent and gave no answer." In his hu­manness, Jesus could have defended himself because that false testi­mony could take his life away. But Jesus remained si­lent. Jesus did not defend him­self to avoid false accusa­tions. This one phrase, "Jesus re­mained silent," tells us that Jesus is the holy God: Jesus transcended mun­dane people's political intrigue. Jesus decided to obey the will of God for world salva­tion through his death and resurrec­tion. Jesus knew that he would die as the Lamb of God as a ransom sacrifice for the sin of the world. Jesus knew that he would be con­demned by their false accusation. So Jesus did not open his mouth. This reminds us 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 her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."

Again the high priest asked Jesus, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" (61) The high priest asked this question so as to charge Jesus with blasphemy. Here, "the Son of the Blessed One" is the Messiah who was prom­ised to come. What did Jesus answer? Look at verse 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.'" In this verse Jesus testified that he is the Messiah. As the Messiah, Je­sus had to undergo trial, suffering and the pain of crucifixion for the sin of the world as the Lamb of God. But Jesus warned them that after his resurrec­tion the Son of Man will sit at the right hand of the Mighty One. Jesus also warned them that he would come again on the clouds of heav­en to judge the living and the dead. This warning was the good news of great joy if they repented and accepted it.

How did the high priest respond to Jesus' words? He tore his pom­pous high priestly garment as if he were a man of holy righteousness and con­demned Jesus for speaking blasphe­my. Even a little child can know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One, through Jesus' di­vine words and deeds. But the high priest cheated his conscience and con­demned Jesus as a man of blasphemy who deserved the death penal­ty. The high priest not only deceived his conscience, but also he gave the vilest influence to his people. At the high priest's words, people became as evil as the high priest. They all condemned Jesus as worthy of death. By the high priest's bad influ­ence, people be­came the entertainers of sadistic joy. Then some began to spit at Jesus; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophe­sy!" And the guards took him and beat him (65). Here we learn that one person's bad influence can ruin a community and a whole nation and at last the whole world. Jesus was tried by the Sanhedrin members. In fact, Jesus was tried in such a way by his chosen people. But in light of God's point of view, Jesus was tried and tortured in our place. Each of us must be tried and tortured because of our own sins. But Jesus took over such a terri­ble trial in our place. Jesus took up all our iniquities and transgressions and was tried in such a way. Praise Jesus! Jesus is our true friend. Jesus is our high priest. Jesus was tried in our place.

II. Peter disowns Jesus (66-72)

How can we imagine that Jesus' top disciple would deny Jesus? It is totally unbelievable. Anyway Peter denied Jesus three times. It was because he was paralyzed by fear. When Jesus was being dragged to the Sanhedrin to be tried, Peter followed Jesus, keeping a distance. He went into the court­yard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire. Obviously, at that time Peter covered his nose with his head cov­ering not to be no­ticed by anyone. But a ser­vant girl saw him there warm­ing him­self. She looked close­ly at him. Then she said, "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus." But Peter denied it. Again the girl saw him there. She said again to those who were standing around, "This fel­low is one of them." Again Peter denied it (70). After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "You are one of them, for you are a Galilean" (you don't speak Jerusalem English). Peter loved Je­sus so much that he was ready to lay down his life for Jesus (31). Now Jesus was on trial. There was a danger that he was to be arrested as one of Jesus' disciples. Yet Peter loved Jesus; he was so loyal to Jesus that he was ready to die for him. But his loyalty was no more than human loyalty. Peter didn't mean to do so. But as soon as that servant girl told him three times that he was one of Jesus' com­pany, he felt as if he got a penicillin shock. In his helpless­ness, he called down curses on himself and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about" (71). As soon as Peter denied Jesus, immediately a rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remem­bered the word Jesus had spoken to him, that before the rooster crows twice, you will disown me three times. And he broke down and wept. Peter was broken. But he was not broken in de­spair. When he broke down, he was not broken; his huge sin of a rocky mount was bro­ken. When he wept, he did not weep out of regret, but he wept with joy that he would see the Risen Christ face to face again.

Before he was arrested, Jesus warned Peter by quoting Zechariah 13:7, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." But Peter did not listen to Jesus because he was very upset that his loyalty was not recognized by Jesus 100%. 14:31 says, "But Peter insisted em­pha­t­i­cally, 'Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.'" We re­member that de­spite their childish faith, Jesus gave them a glorious and hopeful promise of meeting again face to face after his resurrection. "But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee" (28). This prom­ise was indeed a glori­ous prom­ise. This prom­ise suggests Jesus' rising from the dead on the third day. This promise sug­gests that Jesus wins final victo­ry over sin and death. This promise sug­gests that Jesus, the Messi­ah, would give us eternal salva­tion and the kingdom of God through his death and resurrec­tion.

III. Jesus was tried before Pilate (15:1-15)

Since the Jews had no right to execute criminals, they handed Je­sus over to Pilate. Pilate was a Roman governor of Judea. In reality, Pilate had nothing to do with Jesus because it was a matter of Jewish religion. If he had declared that he had nothing to do with Jewish religion, he might have saved himself. But he attempted a political compromise with the Jews, and he in­vited eternal disaster upon himself. Pilate on the throne heard the Jewish ver­dict that Jesus claimed to be the Christ, which meant King of kings. It implied a rebellion against the Roman Em­peror. As soon as Pilate saw Jesus, he ask­ed him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" (2) "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. Pilate, howev­er, knew that it was the jealousy problem of the Jewish religious leaders. So he wanted to rescue Jesus from the hand of the Jews. Pilate hoped that Jesus would defend himself. So he asked him, "Your peo­ple accused you of many things. So it is right for you to answer my ques­tion." Verse 15:5 says, "But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed." Jesus did not reply to Pilate because the Sanhedrin had already decided to de­stroy him. Pilate the gov­ernor was in deep trouble because Jesus did not an­swer his question. Pilate felt that terrible disaster had pounc­ed upon him. He trem­bled be­cause his wife had a night­mare about Jesus and told him, "Don't bother Jesus of Naza­reth" (Mt 27:19). But Jesus was peaceful.

Here, the miserable person was not Jesus on trial, but Pilate the gov­ernor on the throne. Pilate was a smart person. He knew the tradi­tion and the men­tality of the Jews. Now it was the day of custom to release a pris­oner whom the people requested. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the upris­ing. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did (7-8). Wishing that an innocent person like Jesus would be released, Pilate asked, "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?"

What was the response? The chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. Pilate exclaimed, "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" At the moment people shouted, "Cruci­fy him!", Pilate's heart sank. In verse 14 Pilate asked, "Why? What crime has he committed?" Pilate knew that Jesus was inno­cent. Pilate felt that Jesus was more than a man. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" Pilate suc­cumbed to the Jews' in­timidation and had Jesus flogged, and handed over to be cruci­fied. We are the ones who should be flogged to death and crucified be­cause of our sins. But our friend and heavenly Father Jesus was flogged and handed over to be crucified. Out of helplessness, Pilate handed him over to them to be cruci­fied. But history testifies that Pilate did not condemn Jesus to death--Pilate condemned himself, and put himself into eternal condemnation.

When we study Mark's gospel, people, even the Gentile people, liked Jesus. After defeating Satan's temptation in the wilderness through fast­ing prayer for 40 days, Jesus launched the earthly messianic ministry. When Jesus began his ministry, he wanted to win men over to God so that they may be saved. So he said in Mark 1:15, "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Even if Jesus delivered the message of repen­tance, peo­ple were happy and many repented and fol­lowed Jesus. Those who accepted Jesus re­joiced, believing that they have eternal salvation and the kingdom of God in Jesus. Those who fol­lowed Jesus experienced heaven­ly joy.

Jesus chose twelve disciples from among low-class people. Peter was born to be a fisherman. It was very hard for him to turn his back on the sea and follow Jesus who was telling the same old, old story again and again. But a miracle hap­pened. God changed his desire of being a man of the sea into a desire to learn of Jesus and grow up to be a disci­ple of Jesus. Peter was not formally edu­cated. But people of the world say that he is the best teacher who ever lived because he learned of Jesus. When Jesus saw 5,000 peo­ple, Jesus had great compassion on them (Mk 6:34). Jesus taught them the word of life all day long with­out eating. Dur­ing the time of his earthly messi­anic ministry, Jesus opened the eyes of the blind. Jesus healed the men with leprosy. Jesus wept for sorrowful peo­ple. Jesus be­came a fa­ther to the Sa­maritan wom­an. Jesus became a friend to a lone­ly tax col­lector. When we study this passage those who were loved by Je­sus so dearly forgot the grace of Jesus. Now they are under the bad influ­ence of the religious leaders. They were bribed to stand against Jesus. Later, they became worse until they shout­ed, "Crucify him! Cru­cify him!"

Today we studied how Jesus was tried, humiliated and beaten up. Je­sus was tried and tortured in our place. We are the ones to be tried and con­demned because of our iniquities and transgressions. But Jesus was tried and condemned in our place. So Ro­mans 8:1 says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." By his trial he freed us from eternal condemnation. Jesus also taught that he is the Son of God and he will come again. Praise Jesus that in the midst of trial he declared he is the Son of God and he comes again to judge the living and the dead.