

Where we start . . .

What is it about Jesus that creates the greatest tension or conflict when you are discussing Him with others? Why do un-churched people or people of different faiths struggle, at times, with how to come to grips with Jesus?

What we read . . .

You can often tell what is important to someone based on what he or she talks about. We tend to speak up when a topic important to us comes up in conversation. Keep that in mind as you read Mark 14:55-62 and 15:1-5.

When does Jesus refuse to speak? What is common to both trials about when Jesus keeps silent?

When does Jesus speak up? What is in view when Jesus speaks in each of the trials?

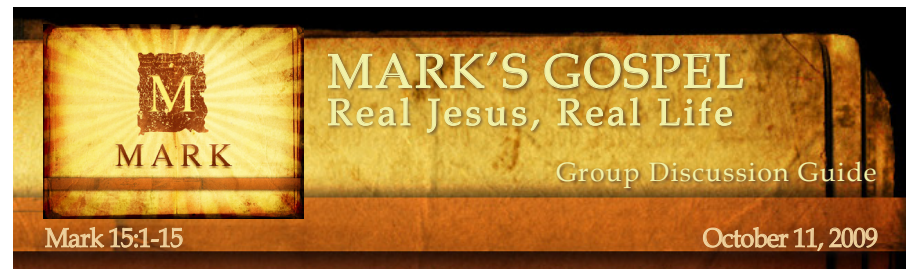
What does this pattern tell you about what is most important to Jesus in the midst of the outplaying of these details? What can be left for later? What must be addressed and understood?

Why this matters . . .

The bottom line is, Jesus is not on trial for *what He did* as much as He is on trial for *who He is*. The things He had been doing certainly point to His identity, but the issue before both the Sanhedrin and Pilate is "Who are You?" What are the implications of this huge thought for . . .

The way you talk to others about Jesus?

The way you personally relate to Jesus?



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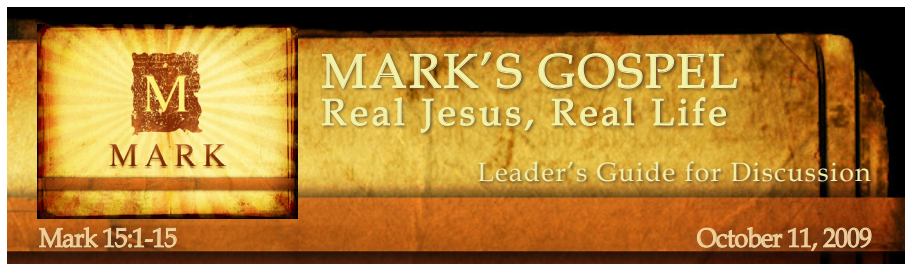
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Diving in . . .

We need to continue to press on in our conversation from last week. At the heart of the controversy swirling around Jesus—for both the Sanhedrin and for Pilate—is the issue of “Who are You?” Whether in our own lives or in dialogue with others, talking about Jesus can be safe as long as we don’t start to be too “hard line” about who He really is. It is Jesus, and not just His teachings or His good deeds, that is both the central issue of the Christian faith and the center target of the controversy that surrounds Him.

Discussing . . .

As you talk together about when conversations get heated when Jesus is the subject, give sufficient time to explore what it is that really bothers people about Him. In many circles, you can talk about Jesus—that is, you can discuss His many good deeds, you can explore the ramifications of the “Golden Rule” or the implications of Jesus’ teaching about being a “Good Samaritan.”

Tensions grow, however, when we press in deeper and further and begin to explore just who Jesus is. If Jesus is *not* merely another good teacher, *not* merely a “nice guy” who did miracles, but is, in truth, unique, authoritative, and (in some real sense) God-come-near, than all discussion about Him must radically change.

That appears to be what is reflected in Jesus’ two “trials”—the hearing before the Sanhedrin and the hearing before Pilate.

As you read and reflect on the passages (Mark 14:55-62 and 15:1-5), it is worth noting the similarities between the two moments in time. Talk through the passages and help your people see that in both . . .

There are multiple witnesses	14:56-60	15:3
Jesus is called to answer	14:60	15:3
Jesus does not answer such charges	14:61	15:4
Jesus is asked about His “identity”	14:61	15:2

And Jesus responds to this question.

What does this suggest? Why does Jesus respond the way that He does—responding the same in both situations?

Whether the charges of the false witnesses in the first hearing or the multiplied arguments raised by the priests when Jesus is before Pilate, it would seem that such concerns were really about things Jesus either allegedly had said or had done. In a sense, Jesus lets His words and works speak for themselves. (And, take note, Pilate admits that there is no “bad witness” in what Jesus has said or done; see 15:14.)

As we noted last week, it isn’t until the specific question of “Who are You?” is put to Jesus that He replies. For Jesus, this *is* the critical question.

With the religious leaders, Jesus offers clarification (as we noted last week). Drawing on Old Testament passages (Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13-14), Jesus expands on the priest’s identification of Jesus as “the Christ/Messiah.”

With Pilate, Jesus refrains from clarification, only affirming that there is something of truth to Pilate’s identification. Jesus’ words (“As you say;” 15:2) is an affirmation; He is saying that there is truth in what Pilate has said. However the way Jesus couches His response—with the emphasis on what *Pilate* has said—suggests that Jesus is leaving the door open to the idea that Pilate may not really know or fully know what that title means. And, Jesus doesn’t elaborate; Pilate doesn’t have a context for understanding more than that.

What are we to make of this? Well, building on what we discussed last week, the real issue is to notice that Jesus Himself is the issue. Who He is really is the sticking point.

This does have all kinds of implications for the way we carry out our lives as His followers. Just think . . . for example . . .

It cannot be enough for people to come to just “like” Jesus. Ultimately everyone does decide whether He is uniquely the one all peoples answer to as Judge and Sovereign and King or not.

It isn’t enough to invite those who don’t know Jesus to “find a church home.” Those who really end up experiencing life in a community of faith do so because they have come to know Jesus—and to know the real Jesus.

It is startlingly inconsistent to affirm that I am a follower of Jesus and to not give the utmost regard to what He has to say about my life. To say we are friends and followers of His and act like He is simply one voice among many we give heed to is ludicrous.

Like for the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem and the Gentile political appointee overseeing the region, knowing and embracing *who* Jesus is the problem. We might really like the guy and may be convinced that He never did anything wrong (like Pilate). We might think a great deal of Him and admit that many people follow Him (like the priests). But if we are not aware of and fully on board with who He is, we are not going to get along with Him well at all!