

A CRISIS OF FAITH

SERIES: THE WAY OF THE LORD: FOLLOWING JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK



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Mark 14:53-72
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Is Jesus Lord or isn't he? It's a simple question, really, and everyone answers it, either directly or indirectly. If you believe Jesus is Lord, you've answered it. If you don't believe he's Lord, you've also answered it. Even many who have come to believe in Jesus, though, suffer crises of faith.

I have a friend who was reared in the church but endured a decade-long crisis of faith, complete with overwhelming fear and shaking panic attacks.

I would become non-functional, unable to think or eat, and would pray in anguish to the God who was the source of my terror.... Nothing else in life mattered in light of eternity. I sought to gain certainty of my faith and destiny, but the intellectual sand under my feet slowly sank.

Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples, suffered a crisis of faith. We learn from him.

Peter follows at a distance

Mark 14:53-54:

⁵³They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together. ⁵⁴Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire.¹

The detachment that seized Jesus in Gethsemane, just outside Jerusalem, now takes him back to the city, to the house of the high priest in order to face members of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council, which was composed of chief priests (the high priest and his associates), elders, and scribes. Jesus, as the Servant of the Lord, wanted to "gather" Israel and bring her back to God (Isaiah 49:5, Matthew 23:37). Because of Jesus, the leaders of Israel gather, but not to God. Instead, they gather in opposition to the Son of God.

Peter, who said he'd rather die than deny Jesus, continues to follow Jesus after the arrest, but at a distance. He's still a disciple, but now he's a secret one, at least for the moment. In the courtyard, Peter warms himself next to a fire, though Mark literally calls the fire a "light." Peter wants to remain hidden, but he also wants to stay warm.

The heat of the fire is Peter's friend, but the light of the fire is his enemy. Perhaps this is the way many of us follow Jesus: we follow, but at a distance. We're not "all in," as they say in Texas hold 'em. If you identify with Peter, then pay special attention to his story.

In verses 55-65, Mark focuses on Jesus. What will happen to Jesus? Peter wants to know.

Before the Sanhedrin

Mark 14:55-59:

⁵⁵Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. ⁵⁶For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. ⁵⁷Some stood up and began to give false testimony against Him, saying, ⁵⁸"We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'" ⁵⁹Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.

This is not a trial per se. The members of the Sanhedrin have already determined that Jesus is a menace, a dangerous false prophet who was leading Israel astray (Deuteronomy 13). He has taken on sacred symbols such as the temple and the law and replaced them with himself. He has offended nationalists such as the Pharisees with his inclusive vision of the kingdom of God. He has troubled Sadducees, who cut deals with Rome, by stirring up the masses and threatening the status quo. He has called the leaders of Israel to account. Regardless of their political leanings, the leaders have concluded that Jesus must die.

However, as subjects of Rome, they have no authority to execute anyone. Therefore, members of the Sanhedrin need to convince Pilate, the Roman governor of the region of Judea, to execute Jesus. To do so, they need to present evidence that Jesus poses a threat to Roman rule. However, they also need to take into account Jewish sensitivities, for many Judeans, not just Galilean pilgrims from the north, have taken a liking to Jesus. If members of the Sanhedrin offend their countrymen, they may provoke a riot.

Moses, anticipating Israel's exile, said, "But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if

you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul” (Deuteronomy 4:29). God himself, speaking through the prophet Jeremiah on the eve of the Babylonian exile, echoed Moses’ words (Jeremiah 29:13). At the time of Jesus, Israel, though occupying the Promised Land, remains an exiled people, oppressed by occupiers and far from her God. She needs to heed the words of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. However, the leaders of Israel, instead of seeking God and finding him, are literally “seeking” evidence against the Son of God, though they aren’t “finding” any.

The best the witnesses before the Sanhedrin can do is to report that Jesus predicted that he would destroy the temple and three days later build another one apart from human effort. Their testimony, though both false and inconsistent, nevertheless has a ring of truth to it. Jesus has in fact predicted the destruction of the temple, without saying who would destroy it, and he also predicted that he would raise up the temple, though he was speaking of the temple of his body (Mark 13:2, John 2:19-21). In fact, Jesus is building a different kind of temple, comprising the renewed people of God.

To speak against the temple in the manner of Jesus was considered a serious matter. When Jeremiah predicted the destruction of the temple in his day, priests and prophets deemed him worthy of death (Jeremiah 26:7-11). Economically, Jerusalem was dependent on the temple. The priests, who had authority over the temple, would be particularly alarmed by threats against it.

The high priest cuts to the chase.

The question

Mark 14:60-65:

⁶⁰The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” ⁶¹But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” ⁶²And Jesus said, “I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.” ⁶³Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? ⁶⁴You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?” And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. ⁶⁵Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, “Prophesy!” And the officers received Him with slaps in the face.

Jesus refuses to dignify the accusations against him with an answer, even at the behest of the high priest. The witnesses, with their inconsistent testimony, have refuted each other. Furthermore, Jesus cannot say anything at this point, even if he were afforded the time necessary for an explanation, to change anyone’s mind. Moreover, since meeting with the Father in Gethsemane, he knows the time has come for him to meet his destiny.

Mark has informed his readers that Jesus is the Christ, the ultimate and long-expected Jewish king. Jesus, however, has remained mostly incognito, especially in public. Nevertheless, messianic overtones accompanied his approach to Jerusalem, and his words and actions against the temple bespoke a certain royal, even messianic, authority (2 Samuel 7:13, Zechariah 6:12). The high priest, hoping to flush Jesus out, asks him point-blank, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”²

If an opponent had asked Jesus such a question earlier in the Gospel of Mark, we might have expected him to answer with something along the lines of a parable. However, the time for parables, partly designed to conceal truth from enemies who would have exploited it, has passed. The time for a showdown with his enemies has come.

“I am,” Jesus answers.

Simple—and damning—enough. But Jesus won’t leave it there. Alluding to Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13, he tells the members of the Sanhedrin (the pronoun “you” in verse 62 is plural) that they will see the Son of Man both “SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER” and “COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.” Psalm 110 depicts the king of Israel sitting at the right hand of God.³ Daniel 7 depicts the Son of Man, the representative of God’s people, ascending to God to receive an everlasting kingdom. Jesus complements his claim to be the Christ by predicting his vindication. The high priest and his associates can do as they please in their makeshift courtroom, but one day, Jesus says, the tables are going to be turned, and he will be sitting in authority—heavenly authority—over them. Furthermore, they will “see” this turnaround. The resurrection of Jesus, the astounding growth of the church, and the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. would vindicate Jesus as the Christ.

The high priest and his cohorts have no further need of witnesses, for the accused himself has satisfied their need. Jesus has given them what they were seeking—and more. The high priest plays his part to the hilt, tearing his clothes to indicate his disgust. If Jesus’ claims weren’t true, some in his day, like the high priest, would construe them as blasphemous. In any event, the Sanhedrin can now use Jesus’ own words against him before Pilate, who isn’t likely to take kindly to any Jew who claims to be a king

with heavenly power. Furthermore, that Jesus only makes a public claim to be the Christ now, while he is at the mercy of his enemies, will appear laughable to the Jewish populace. In popular conception, the Christ will defeat his enemies, not succumb to them. The proceedings at the house of the high priest have sufficiently strengthened members of the Sanhedrin in their hope to win over the Roman governor and preempt a Jewish riot.

Before taking Jesus to Pilate, some members of the Sanhedrin abuse him and mock him as a false prophet.⁴

Meanwhile, Peter has been warming himself in the courtyard. Mark tells Peter's story in verses 66-72.

Peter disowns Jesus

Mark 14:66-71:

⁶⁶As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, ⁶⁷and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene." ⁶⁸But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." And he went out onto the porch. ⁶⁹The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, "This is one of them!" ⁷⁰But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too." ⁷¹But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this man you are talking about!"

Jesus stood up to the high priest and "all" the authorities: the chief priests, elders, and scribes who comprised the "whole" Sanhedrin. Peter, on the other hand, is confronted by only one individual who had no authority: a servant-girl of the high priest. Peter, following Jesus from a distance, hoped to escape notice, but the servant-girl recognizes him as having been with Jesus.⁵ Peter, like the witnesses brought before the Sanhedrin, but unlike Jesus, testifies falsely, in his case by pleading ignorance. Peter was supposed to deny himself; instead, he denies Jesus (Mark 8:34).

Clinging to his boast to follow Jesus but distancing himself from the servant-girl, not to mention the light, not to mention the truth, Peter moves to the porch, or gateway, of the courtyard. The servant-girl, however, won't let him out of her sights and points him out to some bystanders. Her assertion is more pointed: she no longer accuses Peter of being simply "with" Jesus, but as being "one of" his followers. For a second time, Peter disowns Jesus. His testimony, though false, differs from that of the witnesses who spoke before the Sanhedrin in this respect: he's consistent. The

bystanders, however, render their verdict. Agreeing with the servant-girl and contradicting Peter's false testimony, they assert that Peter "surely"—literally, "truly"—is one of Jesus' followers.

As the truth closes in, Peter ratchets up his defense. He intensifies his disassociation from Jesus by cursing—apparently attempting to draw down a curse upon Jesus—and taking an oath. Also, he does not simply say, as he said to the servant-girl, that he doesn't know "what" is being talked about, but that he doesn't know "this man" who is being talked about. He claims not even to know the man to whom he pledged his undying allegiance earlier in the night.

In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to the Father three times, receiving strength to face his accusers in the house of the high priest. Peter didn't pray three times in Gethsemane. He didn't even pray once. Instead, he fell asleep. Then, when he faced his accusers in the courtyard of the high priest, he lied not once, but three times. When Jesus was asked whether he was the Christ, he answered simply and truthfully: "I am." When Peter was accused of being a follower of Jesus, he repeatedly answered falsely.

Peter has distanced himself from Jesus because, at this point, he doesn't share Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God. It's not Peter's courage that fails; it's his worldview. After Peter came to believe that Jesus was the Christ, Jesus predicted that the Son of Man would be rejected and killed. Peter, expecting a Christ that would triumph over his enemies, was beside himself (Mark 8:27-33). By all appearances, Peter's boast to die with Jesus wasn't an empty one. He drew a sword in Gethsemane and struck a blow for Jesus, risking his life.

Peter is willing to die for Jesus provided that Jesus is his kind of Christ. Peter in some sense speaks the truth when he says, "I do not know this man you are talking about." Peter knows Jesus, but he doesn't really know him—at least not yet. Peter does not yet understand Jesus' belief that the way of the Christ is the way of the cross, the way of the servant, the way of self-giving love. Jesus has so thoroughly messed with Peter's concept of the Christ that when he in the end submits to arrest, Peter questions whether he's hitched his wagon to the right train. For Peter, this is a crisis of faith.

The claim: Jesus is Lord

Is Jesus Lord or isn't he? If you're going to have a crisis of faith, you should at least know what you're doubting, what you're thinking about abandoning, and what you will have to face if what you abandon turns out to be true.

The witness of the New Testament, including the

witness of Jesus himself in Mark 14:62, is clear: Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, the Son of God, is the resurrected, ascendant, and now-reigning Lord of the world. Many who don't believe in Jesus might say to him, "Prove it." The New Testament says: "He's already proved it." On the third day, he rose from the dead. The New Testament is also clear on this point: Jesus, who now sits in authority over the world, will consummate his reign and judge the living and the dead. Those who believe him will reign with him in the new creation forever. Those who don't will be banished from the presence of God.

If Jesus is Lord, you don't want to be faithless on the day of the Lord. The courtrooms of this world can do what they please with Jesus, but one day, everyone will have to answer to him. If he isn't Lord, what do you have to lose if you believe in him? Paul says that if Jesus hasn't been raised from the dead, then we will not be raised, and therefore, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Corinthians 15:32). If you don't believe in Jesus, all you'd be missing out on is a few years of eating and drinking—and however else you want to define life—before you die. If you missed out on something, what does that matter in light of eternity? The reasonable thing might just be to believe in Jesus.

Peter, who earlier believed that Jesus was the Christ, has a crisis of faith. At least three reasons for a crisis of faith emerge from his story. If you're going to have a crisis, it might help to know the reasons for that crisis.

The reasons for a crisis

The first reason for a crisis of faith that emerges from Peter's story is that Jesus disappoints us. Jesus stayed in Gethsemane and allowed the detachment from the Sanhedrin to seize him. What kind of Messiah is that? Simply, oftentimes Jesus doesn't do what we want him to do. If we believe that he is Lord, then we probably entertain certain expectations for what he's supposed to do in our lives and in the world as Lord. When he disappoints us, we may question the validity of faith in him.

Therefore, like Peter, we may distance ourselves from Jesus. We usually don't dispart with faith all at once; instead, at first we become more cautious. We still follow Jesus, but now we're following at a distance, unsure of what we've gotten ourselves into. We become less open with our faith. Still, there may be advantages to faith in Christ, such as the community that gathers around him. We stay close enough to feel the warmth of the fire, so to speak, but far enough away so that we can make a break for it if Jesus disappoints us too much. With one foot in and on foot out, we want the advantages of faith without the commitment of faith. Then again, the Scriptures tell us that Jesus is doing something better than we could

have imagined.

The second reason for a crisis of faith that emerges from Peter's story is that powerful forces are aligned against faith. Many in the world, including those who occupy seats of power in government, education, and the marketplace in the so-called Christian West, in the manner of the Sanhedrin, have determined that faith in Jesus is a menace. Why? Because today in the West, Jesus challenges not the sacred temple, as he did in his day, but our sacred autonomy. The rule of life in the United States is that you can believe and do anything you want as long as it doesn't hurt someone else. The Jesus of the New Testament says, "You can do so if you like, but you'll have to answer to God." He calls our world to account, just like he called the Sanhedrin to account. To speak against autonomy is a serious matter in our day, just like speaking against the temple was a serious matter in Jesus' day. You do so at your own risk. You won't be crucified, as Jesus was, but you may be ostracized, and doors may slam in the face of you and your loved ones. You may turn away from certain opportunities because your focus—following Jesus—is elsewhere.

Furthermore, powerful unseen forces are also aligned against faith in Jesus. Satan, according to the Apostle John, is "enraged" with followers of Jesus and wars against them (Revelation 12:17). As the father of lies, he inveighs against faith in Jesus (John 8:44). He takes the word of God away from young believers like a bird plucking seed from the ground, he prowls around like a roaring lion in search of someone to devour, and he even disguises himself as an angel of light (Mark 4:15, 1 Peter 5:8, & 2 Corinthians 11:14). He and his minions manipulate the movers and shakers in our world in ways that oppose faith in Christ.

The powerful forces aligned against faith, both seen and unseen, make it seem as if the reasonable course of action is to make your way in this world apart from faith in Jesus. They make it difficult to believe in Jesus. Then again, the Scriptures tell us that the powers, no matter how malevolent and insidious, are subject to Christ.

The third reason for a crisis of faith that emerges from Peter's story is that following Jesus is different from what we thought it would be. Sometimes, our courage fails. More often, as in the case of Peter, our worldview fails. In principle, we may ascent to Jesus' command to deny ourselves, take up a cross, and walk in the way of suffering, self-giving love; we may ascent to the triumph of the cross, the triumph of the resurrection, and the promise of the new creation. In reality, we cherish different dreams, and Jesus wants more of us than we want to give. When our dreams crash and burn, we might wonder, like Peter, whether we've hitched our wagon to the right train. Then, if we've already distanced ourselves from Jesus, we move even further away, to the gateway of the courtyard, so to

speak. Instead of denying ourselves, we deny Jesus. Then again, the Scriptures tell us that if we follow Jesus, we'll come alive; we'll become, surely and eventually, fully human.

Whatever the factors, many who have chosen to follow Jesus at some point or points have crises of faith. Then what do you do? At one point, my friend who suffered the decade-long crisis of faith ran:

To escape my terrible thoughts, I tried to live shallowly. I focused on having fun, partying with friends, keeping active and busy. I knew avoidance was counterproductive, but I didn't know how else to respond to a God whom I couldn't trust and who wasn't providing any comfort or answers. I opted for a false sense of comfort through thoughtless living. This only lasted for a few years, however, because I knew what I was doing and knew it wasn't the life I wanted to live.

Is there another way to deal with a crisis of faith? What happened to Peter? There's one verse in Mark's narrative we haven't considered: the last one.

The rooster crows

Mark 14:72:

⁷²Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And he began to weep.

Earlier in the night, Jesus told Peter, "Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times" (Mark 14:30). Is he the Christ, then? If he predicted Peter's downfall so precisely, how can he not be? Such questions must be wreaking havoc in Peter's mind. When the rooster crows a second time, a higher court renders its verdict: Yes, Peter, Jesus is the Christ.

And what of Peter? In a sense, he was on trial for being a follower of Jesus. The servant-girl said he was a follower of Jesus. The bystanders said he was a follower of Jesus. The simple fact of the matter is that Peter is a follower of Jesus. Jesus is the Christ, and Peter is a disciple. Peter will follow Jesus. But first, he weeps bitter tears.

Peter, pretending to be someone he's not, crashes into a harsh reality: he is a follower of Jesus, but following Jesus is different from what he thought it would be, because Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God is different from his. With his current understanding of the kingdom of God,

Peter doesn't have what it takes to follow Jesus. He had said he'd follow Jesus anywhere, but he was able to follow no farther than to the courtyard of the high priest. Peter had to fail. He failed at something he had no business succeeding at—following Jesus with a seriously flawed understanding of what it meant for Jesus to be the Christ and what it meant for him to follow the Christ. He failed because his vision of reality failed. So the tears flow. And as the tears flow, he is being prepared to find out who Jesus is and who he himself is.

He is a broken man—exactly the kind of man Jesus wants. Jesus is not dismayed by Peter's failure. He expected it. The angel at the empty tomb would tell the women who thought they'd find the body of Jesus there, "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him; just as He told you'" (Mark 16:7). Go tell Peter. Peter, who cursed Jesus and swore he didn't know him, receives a special invite to the re-launch. The tears of Peter's biggest failure, then, water the seeds of his discipleship.

Peter would find out who Jesus is and who he himself is. Not many days after his failure, he would take his stand on the Day of Pentecost, in Jerusalem, the scene of his failure, and preach a sermon about Christ that resulted in the conversion of 3,000 people (Acts 2:14, 41). He himself was later seized by the Jewish leaders and stood before the Sanhedrin, the same group Jesus stood before, to answer charges. He followed Jesus all the way in, not just to the courtyard. Then, filled with the Holy Spirit, he spoke boldly of Jesus (Acts 4:1-22). For Peter, failure was part of the training.⁶

Crisis resolution

Eventually, all of us who start following Jesus crash into a harsh reality. Jesus disappoints us. We encounter powerful opposition. Following Jesus is different from what we thought it would be. Inevitably, we fail. More to the point, our worldview fails.

Then, the rooster crows, so to speak. We hear something or see something or feel something. Maybe we even know something. Perhaps some surprising insight occurs to us or is given to us from who knows where, and it makes sense of things, puts them into perspective. Then, perhaps, if you're the crying sort, or maybe even if you're not, you weep. Peter doesn't strike us as the crying sort, but he wept bitter tears.

You followed Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, so to speak, but no further. You failed. You had to fail. Your version of what it meant to follow Jesus had to fail. You had to fail so that you could be renewed. You find out who Jesus is. Yes, he's Lord. You find out who you are. Yes,

you're a follower of Jesus. Yes, you're broken: exactly the kind of person Jesus wants. Sometimes, failure—especially the failure of your worldview—can tune your ears to hear the rooster when it crows.

Jesus is not dismayed by failure. He expects it. He expects more failure from you than you expect for yourself. One may even say he delights in it, if it leads to renewal. The tears of failure, then, water the seeds of discipleship. So you get up and follow Jesus in a new way: the way of the Lord.

If you build a structure poorly, with shoddy materials and workmanship, the structure won't last. When your faith structure falls, so to speak, you're devastated. What falls, though, you're better off without: the wood, hay, and straw of pride, control, and selfishness, for example. When it falls, you have the exciting opportunity to rebuild with the gold, silver, and precious stones of humility, trust, and self-sacrifice, for example.

Seek and find

What became of my friend who suffered panic attacks and ran from her crisis of faith? The rooster crowed:

After a particularly trying incident, I broke down and admitted to God that in all my adventures, I really was seeking peace with him. I didn't have any more answers than before, but I was cured from running. My struggle with doubt forced me to let go of the need for certainty and pushed me into active faith. I was forced to trust God, not logical answers or absolute proof. With the intellectual rug of certainty pulled out from under me, I learned to exercise faith in Christ when nothing else sufficed. This attitude of trust expands to other areas as well: in my expectations about what my life will look like, whether I will be married, how long I'll live, how much I'll suffer in life, and ultimately what will happen after I die. In my doubt, my faith was refined.

I'm learning what it means to live in faith, trusting that God will lead my life as I step forward, instead of shrinking back in fear of the unknown. I am learning to exercise courage through faith. By not requiring certainty for my faith to thrive, my spiritual castle stands strong yet supple so that it won't shatter with each gust of doubt. I've learned to trust a God who doesn't provide absolute proof but instead requires me to step out in faith and incomplete knowledge, as he proves himself through my obedience and continued questioning.

Mostly, and finally, my friend took her crisis of faith to the Lord, especially after the rooster crowed, so to speak—after a particularly trying incident that caused her to break down and stop running from the Lord. Often, a personal crisis, which prompts us to seek the Lord in a new way, helps us resolve a spiritual crisis. Don't run from a crisis; instead, confront it. When facing a crisis of faith, we would do well to remember Peter's words not long after he began following Jesus. Many people, once they started understanding Jesus, began peeling off. Jesus then asked his twelve disciples, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom else shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:67-68).

Indeed, where else are you going to go? Who else in our world speaks of eternal life like Jesus? If you have a crisis of faith, stay with him. He'll help you through it. Don't seek like the Sanhedrin—for evidence against Jesus. "Seek, and you will find," says Jesus (Matthew 7:7). Seek for rumors of him, traces of him, suggestions of him—and listen for the rooster.

NOTES

¹Literary structure:

A Jesus led away to high priest (53)

B Peter followed into courtyard of high priest (54)

A' Jesus before his accusers (55-65)

1 False witnesses vs. Jesus (55-59)

2 High priest vs. Jesus: Jesus is the Christ (60-64)

3 Some mocked him: "Prophecy" (65)

B' Peter before his accusers

1' Servant-girl vs. Peter (66-70a)

2' Bystanders vs. Peter: Peter was with Jesus / is one of them (70b-71)

3' Jesus' prophecy fulfilled (72)

²Son of God was a title for the Christ. The high priest's use of the word "Blessed" may be motivated by typical Jewish hesitancy to speak the name of God.

³If the high priest could refer to God as "the Blessed One," Jesus could remind him that God can also be called "Power." The one who is blessed, worthy of praise, is also all-powerful. The high priest, with whatever power he enjoys for the moment, will have to answer to a higher Power.

⁴It should not be lost on Mark's readers, however, that Jesus predicted that he would be treated in such a manner (Mark 10:32-34). Also, long before the time of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah predicted that the Servant of the Lord would be exposed to "humiliation and spitting." As members of the Sanhedrin beat and spit at the apparently forlorn figure before them and challenge him to "prophecy," they are, in fact, fulfilling the prophecies of both Jesus and Isaiah.

⁵The servant girl calls Jesus "the Nazarene," identifying him as being from the Galilean town of Nazareth, a village in the north. Peter, likewise, was from Galilee.

⁶The Sanhedrin mocked Jesus and challenged him to prophesy. Now, the same night, his prophecy regarding Peter has been fulfilled. Jesus accurately predicted that Peter would deny him three times. Therefore, his more significant prophecy is trustworthy: "you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

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