



# The Gospel of Mark

A Living Word Independent Bible Study



The Gospel of Mark  
Part 38  
Mark 14:43-65

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# Mark 14:43-65

(NIV)

## INTRODUCTION

We are now in our fourth session covering the long 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mark's Gospel.

The familiar scenes in this chapter include:

The Anointing of Jesus (lesson 35)

The Lord's Supper (lesson 36)

The Prediction of Peter's Denial (lesson 36)

The Garden of Gethsemane (lesson 37)

The Arrest of Jesus (this lesson)

Jesus' Jewish Trial (this lesson)

Peter's Denial (next lesson)

We will be looking at Jesus' arrest and trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin in this lesson.

# Mark 14:43-65

(NIV)

## INTRODUCTION

One of the first things we have to ask about the story of Jesus' trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin is this:

Where did this information come from?

Why does Mark know the details of what happened in the trial before the Sanhedrin, that took place in a room that was probably closed to any Christ-sympathizers?

It is unlikely that any firsthand eyewitnesses later became Christians (although it is possible).

The sketchy outline of what would likely have been a much longer trial than what we have written about here suggests that the information may have come from Peter, with the limited information he could glean while in the courtyard.

Before we get there, though, we have the story of Jesus' arrest itself.

## Mark 14:43 (NIV)

Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

“Judas, one of the Twelve”

As predicted, the betrayer is indeed one of “the Twelve”. The Twelve were to represent a repentant and restored Israel.

They were to be the foundation of a new beginning for Israel.

They had been appointed by Jesus, entrusted with the Kingdom message, empowered to do Jesus’ work, and promised positions of authority.

Thus, Judas’ betrayal is as much a betrayal of Israel as it is of Jesus.

“a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests”

There are many documents from the decades from 40 AD through 60 AD that attest to the reality of “thugs” working for the Jewish leadership.

They would go to obtain tithes from priests by force, even beating those who refused or could not give.

They were a strongly armed “enforcement detail”, specializing in violence and intimidation.

## Mark 14:44 (NIV)

Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.”

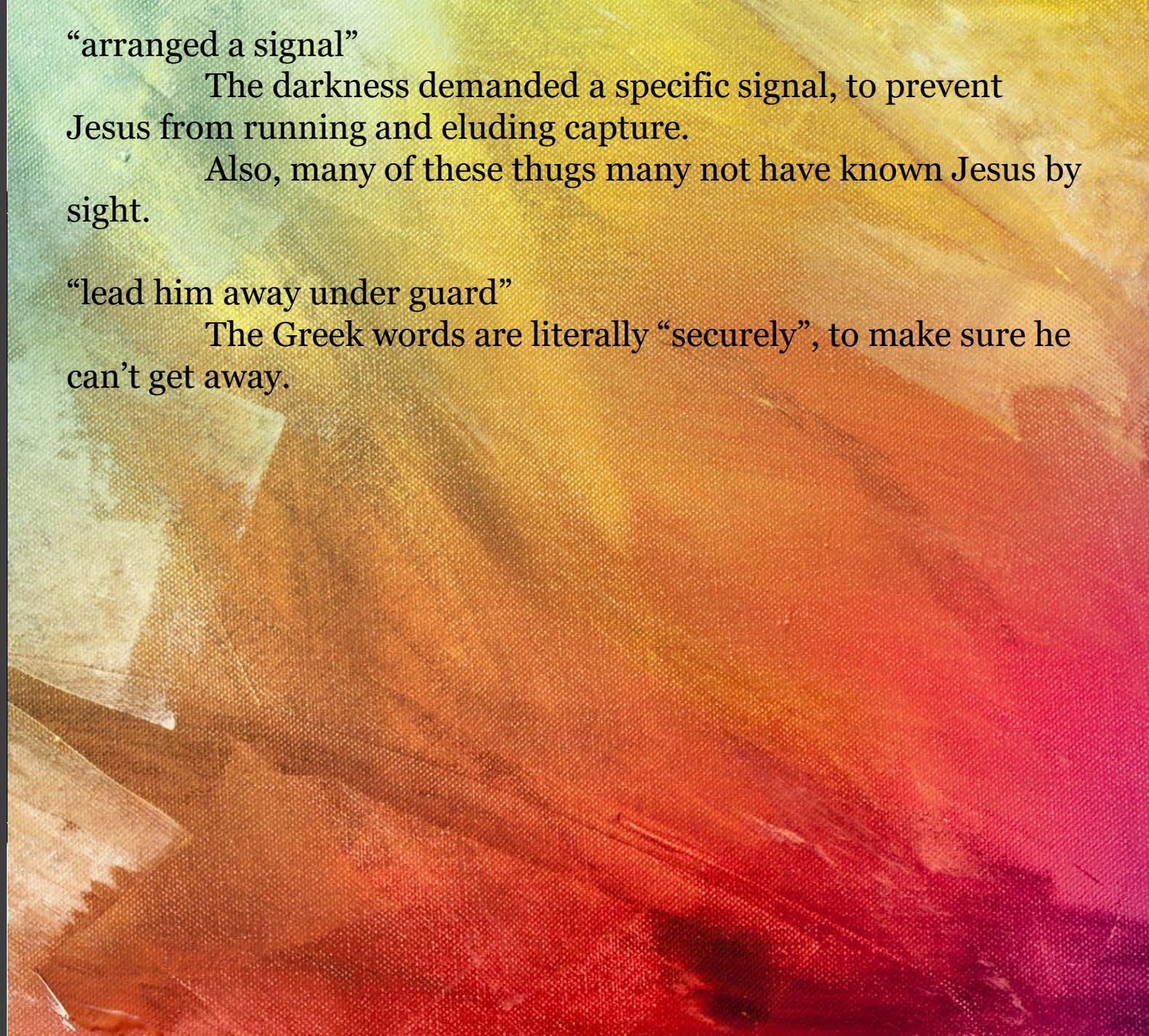
“arranged a signal”

The darkness demanded a specific signal, to prevent Jesus from running and eluding capture.

Also, many of these thugs many not have known Jesus by sight.

“lead him away under guard”

The Greek words are literally “securely”, to make sure he can’t get away.



# Mark 14:45-46

(NIV)

Going at once to Jesus,  
Judas said, “Rabbi!”  
and kissed him. The men  
seized Jesus and  
arrested him.

“Going at once to Jesus”

The words make clear that Judas wasted no time in accomplishing his mission.

“and kissed him”

The kiss was a sign of affection and respect for a rabbi. It's use is the signal heightens the villainy and hypocrisy of the betrayal.

“seized Jesus and arrested him”

This is done with the intent to secure Jesus and to discourage a counter-attack from the disciples.

## Mark 14:47 (NIV)

Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

“drew his sword and struck”

Mark does NOT specifically say that this is one of the Twelve – just “one of those standing near”.

Matthew’s and Luke’s Gospels both imply that it was a disciple (using language of “a companion”, and “a follower”, respectively).

John’s Gospel tells us, outright, that it was Peter.

Was Peter just trying to demonstrate his loyalty?

Jesus WAS in trouble, being attacked by persons who were KNOWN to act violently.

Striking the ear has sometimes been interpreted as a “miss” – that Peter was swinging wildly or blindly.

But the loss of an ear was the punishment given to robbers, and here created a symbolic wound meant to shame the victim.

It would be seen as a “mutilation” that would disqualify the servant from further temple service.

## Mark 14:48 (NIV)

“Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?”

“Am I leading a rebellion”

More literally, the words are “am I a robber/brigand/rebel/insurrectionist” (the Greek word means any and all of these).

There had been MANY pretenders to the throne after Herod the Great died in 4 BC.

These men had led numerous revolts and insurrections. Jesus essentially asks if he is being arrested on similar charges.

## Mark 14:49 (NIV)

“Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.”

“Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts”

In other words, “Have you SEEN me doing the kinds of violent actions insurrectionists do?”

The words also suggest that more time may have elapsed in Jerusalem than Mark has clearly indicated.

It has only been chapters 11-12 in Mark, less than a week – and the language of “every day” may imply a longer period of time.

Jesus also implies that those arresting him know their action would not meet with public approval.

The words “with you” imply that Jesus recognized at least some of them as present during his teaching.

“the Scriptures must be fulfilled”

Zechariah 13:7 is a primary reference here:

Zechariah 13:7 – “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!’ declares the LORD Almighty. ‘Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones.’”

Israel, again, is bringing judgment upon itself.

# Mark 14:50-51

(NIV)

Then everyone deserted him and fled. A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him,

“everyone deserted him and fled”

Remember Mark 14:27:

Mark 13:27 – “You will all fall away,’ Jesus told them”

ALL of the disciples did, in fact, flee.

“a young man wearing nothing but a linen garment”

There are no clues to this young man’s identity.

An ancient manuscript known as the “extensions to Mark” that has been discovered (and often referred to as “Secret Mark”) suggests the rich young ruler from Mark chapter 10.

Other suggestions have included the disciple John (who was young), John Mark (the author of the Gospel), James the younger brother of Jesus (who would later lead the early church), or the young man at the tomb in 16:5 (although Matthew clearly identifies this figure as an angel).

Tradition has long held that, since Matthew and Luke omit any mention of it, this is an autobiographical note, referring to John Mark, the author.

## Mark 14:52 (NIV)

he fled naked, leaving  
his garment behind.

“fled naked, leaving his garment behind him”

It is hard for us to understand how a “linen garment” could be left behind.

However, the words of 14:51 describing the linen garment are better understood as “a linen sheet wrapped around his naked body”.

This helps us to better understand how a “garment” could be lost while being seized!

This verse COULD be a reference to a verse from the prophet Amos:

Amos 2:16 – “Even the bravest warriors will flee naked on that day,” declares the LORD.

But PROBABLY, it simply underscores the fact that whereas JESUS is prepared for what happens, his disciples and followers were NOT.

They fall into panic and disorder, striking the high priest’s servant or narrowly escaping and fleeing in a disgraceful manner (further symbolized by nakedness).

Jesus, though, stands his ground, ready to “drink the cup”.

# Mark 14:53 (NIV)

They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together.

“They took Jesus to the high priest”

Mark does not name him here, or anywhere in his Gospel. But the high priest Caiaphas is named nine times in the books of Matthew, Luke, John, and Acts.

John says that Caiaphas is the son-in-law of Annas, who Luke helps us to see must be a former high priest with enduring influence.

John 18:12b-13 – “They bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year.”

Luke 3:2 – “during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.”

“all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together”

These are those who have been the chief antagonists since Jesus arrived in Jerusalem.

A nocturnal assembly of these high ranking figures attests to their alarm and urgency.

They want to dispatch of Jesus quickly before the Feast of Unleavened Bread is in full swing.

## Mark 14:54 (NIV)

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.

“Peter followed”

This begins Peter’s narrative, but it will not be concluded until 14:66-72, to be covered in the next session of this study.

“courtyard of the high priest”

This tells us WHERE the trial takes place, and also puts Peter in a place to learn Jesus’ fate.

Larger homes often had a large, gated outdoor courtyard in front, which was easily accessed from the road.

The formal entrance to the house itself was from within the courtyard.

“warmed himself at the fire”

Peter is hoping to remain inconspicuous.

Remember that he, himself, is vulnerable – especially if he IS the one who struck the high priest’s servant!

## Mark 14:55 (NIV)

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.

“the whole Sanhedrin”

The Sanhedrin is the Jewish judicial council.

The “whole” Sanhedrin could possibly be hyperbole – this does not appear to be a formal sitting of the Sanhedrin, but a group convening to get testimony against Jesus, perhaps for a later formal trial.

The chief priests are looking for a consensus from the Jewish Sanhedrin that Jesus should be handed over to Rome with a capital execution recommendation (“so that they could put him to death”).

“evidence against Jesus”

There had to be eyewitnesses, verified, according to Jewish law, and they could not use circumstantial evidence.

“but they did not find any”

Note that this trial is a strange mixture of justice and injustice.

It begins with a strong prejudice against Jesus, and may have had illegal features (like it being held at night).

BUT – they admit to inadequate evidence, and are unwilling to construct or act on false information (see the next verse).

# Mark 14:56-57

(NIV)

Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him:

“testified falsely ... their statements did not agree”

This results in a failure to find admissible incriminating evidence against Jesus.

In modern language, their sworn testimonies conflicted with each other.

Again .. The strange mixture of “justice” with “injustice”.

“gave this false testimony”

We get the details of ONE specific accusation.

## Mark 14:58 (NIV)

“We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.’”

“I will destroy this man-made temple”

Mark has NOT related Jesus making any such statement.

Hence, Mark calls it “false testimony”.

Jesus had prophesied its DESTRUCTION, not that HE would do it ... and Jesus never refers to building a new one ... in MARK’s Gospel!

The Gospel of John has a statement by Jesus that COULD give rise to such an accusation, but it is unfamiliar to readers of Mark’s Gospel alone:

John 2:19 – “Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’”

The charge could also be an accusation that Jesus had made statements claiming Messiahship.

This could be the reason for the specific question coming in verse 60, in response.

Zechariah 6:12 – “Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the LORD.’”

Referring to the temple as “man-made” could also have been construed as blasphemous – this is the kind of language usually reserved for use in referring to cast idols.

If the statement that Jesus HIMSELF had threatened to destroy the temple could be confirmed, Jesus would have been subject to serious punishment, perhaps even execution.

# Mark 14:59-60

(NIV)

Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

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?”

“their testimony did not agree”

It was probably not the statement itself, but the details surrounding when and where, that did not correlate.

The details would need to agree for any one witness’s testimony to be corroborated.

“high priest ... asked Jesus”

The witnesses have all been ineffective, so Caiaphas takes the direct approach, questioning Jesus directly.

“What is this testimony”

Caiaphas now hopes that Jesus’ own words will incriminate him.

# Mark 14:61 (NIV)

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

“But Jesus remained silent”

Notice, however, that Jesus WILL answer the next question.

Perhaps, Jesus did not want to dignify “false testimony” with an answer.

“Are you the Christ?”

The Greek grammar here puts the emphasis on the word “YOU” in this question.

Are YOU the Christ? (spoken with implied contempt).

# Mark 14:61 (NIV)

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

“son of the Blessed One”

This is a qualification that makes the question clearer.

“Christ”, or “Messiah”, mean “anointed one” – and COULD simply imply a claim to being a prophet or a priest, both of whom were “anointed”.

But this language of “son of the Blessed One” now specifically implies the EXPECTED KING, a “son of God”, descended from David, as in 2 Samuel and the Psalms:

2 Samuel 7:12-16 – “When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”

Psalms 2:2 – “The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One.”

Psalms 2:7 – “I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me: ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father.’”

This could then be seen as a POLITICAL question (are you a king?) or a RELIGIOUS question (are you the bringer of end-times?), depending on Caiaphas’ perspective – which leads Jesus to a clarifying answer ...

## Mark 14:62 (NIV)

“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.”

“I am”

Jesus gives a basic affirmation here – answering “yes”.

It is interesting to note, though, the different ways Matthew and Luke report Jesus’ reply. The literal Greek translations there are NOT an outright admission as here in Mark:

Matthew 26:64 – “You have said it.”

Luke 22:70 – “You say that I am.”

Did Mark abbreviate the statement, so that we have a direct claim on Jesus’ part?

Jews would have thought a direct claim preposterous – even early Jewish Christians.

Or, did Matthew and Luke add these words to their versions to alleviate the impact of the claim?

It is not easy to know how to account for the differences here.

## Mark 14:62 (NIV)

“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.”

“You will see the Son of Man”

Jesus says that THOSE PRESENT will get this confirmation.

It is a clear allusion to Daniel 7:13-14, a passage with numerous references in Mark’s Gospel, as we have seen throughout.

Daniel 7:13-14 – “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. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

“right hand”

This language is from Psalm 110, and implies the authority to judge his judges:

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

Jesus pictures himself sitting beside God when he comes, in judgment of his enemies.

## Mark 14:63 (NIV)

The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked.

“high priest tore his clothes”

This is a prescribed action when the judges hear blasphemy, reaching far back into biblical history, as a way to convey great anguish.

Genesis 37:28-29 – “So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph us out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt. When Reuben returned to the cistern, and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes.”

Job 1:18-20 – “While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, ‘Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you.’ At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship.”

## Mark 14:64 (NIV)

“You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” They all condemned him as worthy of death.

“You have heard the blasphemy”

Basically, the blasphemy is a claim to a divine identity based on the usage of Daniel, claiming a right to sit on GOD’S throne.

If it were merely the “son of God” claim, implying a right to Davidic kingship, it might have been deemed SEDITION, but not BLASPHEMY.

This fact enables the priests to get Rome involved, though.

There was also an implicit threat against the high priest, God’s servant, which could be construed as blasphemous.

It is also POSSIBLE that Jesus used the divine name of God, YHWH, in his statement.

The name YHWH is translated “I AM” in the Old Testament, and in Mark’s Gospel, the Greek for “I AM” is how Jesus replies to the direct question (although, not in Matthew or Luke, where, as we have seen, the language is closer to “you say so”).

LATER Judaism made the uttering of the divine name the PRIMARY basis for a charge of blasphemy.

It seems clear that THEY want Jesus for blasphemy, but hand him over to Rome under charges of insurrection.

“worthy of death” ... Just as Jesus has predicted.

## Mark 14:65 (NIV)

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.

“some began to spit ... blindfolded ... struck”

These are all details Jesus predicted back in 10:34:

Mark 10:34 – “who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him.”

Keep in mind that those present are members of the elite judicial council, the Sanhedrin!

Spitting on someone was utterly shameful:

Deuteronomy 25:9 – “His brother’s widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, ‘This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother’s family line.’”

Numbers 12:14 – “The LORD said to Moses, ‘If her father had spit in her face, would she not have been in disgrace for seven days?’”

“guards took him and beat him”

Now, the guards take their turn – they would have been outside with Peter until now.

# Mark 14:43-65

(NIV)

## SUMMARY

It is very important to note that in the Jewish trial, Jesus is condemned for telling the truth about himself.

If his words are true, as Christians believe they are, then there is no crime in his claim.

If his words are false, they the Sanhedrin rightly judged his words to be blasphemous.

Part of the human situation is that sinful human beings often view real truth as horrible and reprehensible.

GOD must break through, through the Holy Spirit, to enable us to see and accept God's truth as good, beautiful, and true.

The arrest and trial demonstrate the either/or nature of the question of Jesus' identity that has been so central to Mark's Gospel:

Either Jesus is the Son of Man and Son of God,  
Or Jesus is a misguided blasphemer claiming a divine identity not his own.

We too must make our choice regarding Jesus' identity.



## Bibliography

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