

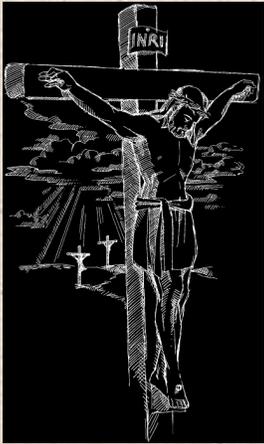
GOD'S PLAN FROM BEGINNING TO END!

Second Sunday in Lent (March 4, 2012)

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Mark 14:61-62

But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."



Who is Jesus? Some say He was a great teacher. Others suggest that He was a martyr for a good cause. If you look around, you'll find all sorts of answers to the question of Jesus' identity. When Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Festival of Dedication, the Jews gathered around Him and said, "*How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered, I did tell you, but you did not believe*" (John 10:24). While Jesus stood before the high priest, He was asked the same question: "*Are you the Christ?*" Here Jesus answers clearly and boldly. He was not shy about who He is. Nor was He timid about saying what He had come to do. What He said before the high priest also points us to the distant future and the end of the world—judgment day. Jesus challenges us to see His cross both for what He was doing and for what He would do. **See the cross! It's God's plan from beginning to end!**

I. GOD SENT HIS SON ACCORDING TO HIS PLAN.

The high priest's question was simple: "*Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?*" The high priest certainly knew the Scriptures. He knew the prophecies concerning the Messiah. Even using the term *Christ* indicated that he knew God had anointed one person to come and redeem the people. Every Jew was waiting for Messiah's appearance. Even many Jews today who don't accept Jesus as the Messiah still look for the Messiah to appear to rescue them. The ancient high priest knew all the prophecies and phrased the question so that Jesus could not avoid the implication and the significance of his question. He asked, "*Are you the Messiah prophesied in the Scriptures?*"

In addition, the high priest cited another reference. He wanted to know if Jesus was the "*Son of the Blessed One.*" By using the term *Blessed One* to refer to God, the high priest was asking Jesus if he was the Son of Yahweh. Devout Jews were forbidden to speak the name Yahweh because it was so revered. As a matter of fact, the ancient manuscripts did not even give that word vowels. Whenever they read the Scriptures and encountered the name Yahweh, they substituted another term. The high priest used "Blessed One" as a substitute for Yahweh, the revered name of God. For these leaders, one who claimed to be the "Son of the Blessed One" was making Himself equal to God.

The question was designed to put Jesus on the spot. It was like so many of the other questions they had put to Jesus, attempting to present a question that would incriminate Him. Once they had asked whether it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar. Then Jesus had asked for a coin and said, "*Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's*" (Matthew 22:21).

This question was like that one. From the perspective of the high priest, Jesus could not give a correct answer. If Jesus said that He was not the Messiah, the Christ, He would be making a mockery of everything He had claimed during His ministry. They would call Jesus a fraud and a deceiver—an admitted false prophet. On the other hand, if Jesus said that He was the Messiah, He would be guilty of blasphemy. That violation called for the strictest punishment. It was a capital crime punishable by stoning. Since these Jews did not believe Jesus could be the Messiah, they considered Him a liar and a fraud.

Jesus boldly and clearly answered, "I AM." He admitted to being the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ. He confessed that He was the one the Old Testament prophets wrote about. In effect, He told the council that night what St. Paul would later write to the Christians in Galatia: "**When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons**" (Galatians 4:4-5). Jesus was challenging these leaders to see His cross. He asserted that He had come as the Messiah. That was God's plan. God had planned for Jesus to be in this court at this time, facing judicial abuse and eventually death. Jesus knew His Father's will and He obeyed it. "Yes, I AM the Messiah," Jesus confessed.

What did that mean for Jesus? It meant that He would suffer and die. Jesus knew the Old Testament Scriptures too. Like the high priest, He knew that the Messiah would be despised and rejected by men. He would be pierced for the transgressions of all sinners, crushed for all the iniquities of all humanity. He would be wounded and punished in the place of all, including the high priest and those Jewish leaders (Isaiah 53). The cross was central to the work of the Messiah.

This declaration of Jesus is remarkable. Consider the situation. He had been arrested and bound in the garden. He had been placed in a holding cell in the high priest's residence, awaiting interrogation. He had been interviewed first by Annas, then by the high priest, Caiaphas. But Jesus was not whimpering or whining about His treatment. He did not apologize for offending the Jewish leaders. Instead, He left no doubt about whom He is. He affirmed quickly, clearly, and confidently that He is the Messiah. He was not a simple back woods rabbi from the country of Galilee. He had come as the Son of God, just as God had planned since the first sin in the Garden of Eden. There God had said that Satan would strike the heel of the One who was to come and bring salvation. Here that One was, willing to lay down His life as God had planned.

Why is this so important? First, it is important for us because the world still doesn't believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One. They will agree that He was a great leader, a learned philosopher, or a moral teacher. Some suggest that Jesus evolved His sense of identity as He grew up and carried out His preaching. Their opinion is that Jesus never really understood His identity. Who could imagine that He was sent by God to rescue sinful creatures from sin, death, and hell? But that is exactly who Jesus is and who He confesses to be.

Jesus knew what He had come to do, and that's important to us because if He had not died on the cross, we would have no salvation. That's the second reason why it is so important to understand who Jesus is. What He did, He did for us because we could not do it. We have no gift to offer God—no dedication—that can make us worthy or satisfy His justice. We have nothing to offer to create peace between us and God. We are unable to save ourselves; God had to do it, and he did by sending Jesus the Messiah. **While we were still powerless sinners, Christ died for us all** (Romans 5). We are redeemed by His holy, precious blood and his innocent suffering and death—by his cross. What love for us God demonstrated in the cross of Jesus. The Messiah stood before the high priest at the threshold of His passion. He is the Messiah.

II. God's Son will come again.

As bold and confident as His confession was, Jesus did not simply stop there. He went on with a surprising comment to His accusers. Jesus' assertion is that He would come again. He proclaimed that He will sit at the right hand of the Mighty One and come on the clouds of heaven. He identified God as the Mighty One, showing the same reverence the high priest did for the name of God, but Jesus added, "Mighty One," rather than "Blessed One." Jesus declared His power. He will exercise all the power of God as He sits at the right hand of God. After He rose from the dead, He declared the same thing. He told his disciples, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me**" (Matthew 28:18).

He proclaimed that He will return on the clouds of heaven. He came first as a small child—a baby—in Bethlehem, but He will return in power and glory. Imagine, as Jesus said these words— He was arrested, bound, ready to be beaten and sentenced to death. He looked helpless more like a victim than Lord of heaven and earth. It's no wonder that the guards ridiculed Him. They spit in His face, blindfolded Him, struck Him, and then taunted Him, "Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit you?" (Matthew 26:67,68; Mark 14:65). Later they would challenge Him to come down from the cross. His power and glory were nowhere to be seen, and they scorned His bold claims.

We should make no mistake here. Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. He humbled Himself to suffer death on a cross. He was the sacrifice for all humanity. His blood is so precious that He cleanses the whole world of sin (1 John 1:7). The claim of Jesus is remarkable because it makes us think, just as it forced the high priest to think. Is this arrested person a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord of all? How can He claim that He will come again on the clouds of heaven unless He's making it all up and is a liar? If He's not a liar, then He must be a lunatic with delusions of grandeur. But another choice is that Jesus is who He says that He is—the Messiah who came to lay down His life for sinners and later will return to claim them.

We believe that Jesus is who He said He is. It assures us that the sins of all humanity are forgiven in Christ, that God has declared all people righteous in Christ Jesus. See the cross. We have an eternal home waiting for us. It's all part of God's plan: the cross of Jesus is there to redeem you and bring you to the home God has prepared.

For Jesus cross has made our peace, and by His wounds we are healed. That's been God's plan all along, from beginning to end, a plan that saves you. In Jesus name, amen and amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. AMEN!