

## *Mark: The Mysterious Messiah*

Week 27: Mark 14:66–15:20

**Introductory Exercise:** What does it mean for Jesus to be Lord?

When Peter denies that he knows Jesus, to whom does he deny as much, and what reasons within the text can we infer for his denial? What clues do the bystanders use to discern his identity, and what does this episode signal about Jesus's standing in the world here at the end of chapter 14?

Pontius Pilate is a figure who appears both in Biblical texts and in contemporary Roman and Jewish texts. When he appears in Mark, what is his initial reaction to the Sanhedrin and to Jesus? How does Jesus respond to the official face of Roman power?

Releasing political enemies was a practice made famous by Julius Caesar almost a hundred years before the crucifixion of Jesus. What reasons might Rome have for offering such a thing? (And how odd would it be for a modern state to offer to release an enemy to the occupied people?) What does Mark 15:10 reveal about the relationships between Pilate and the temple authorities? What does the name “Barabbas” mean? As you read them, do Pilate's words in 15:12 indicate political calculation or something else?

Documents from the late Republic and early Empire show attitudes towards crucifixion not unlike contemporary American attitudes towards torture. Romans, by and large, did not crucify other Romans, though it was not an uncommon practice in situations of slave rebellions and provincial insurgencies. (Pilate especially was considered a brute and eventually relieved of duty because of his penchant for crucifixion.) When the crowd calls for crucifixion, what kind of relationship with Rome do they commit themselves to?

When the soldiers of the cohort gather, what particular things do they do to mock the latest insurgent king? Although they do these things sarcastically towards Jesus, what is the actual source for these symbols and salutations?