

The Trials of Jesus

Part 1 (Jewish)

Jesus would undergo six trials on His way to a sentence on the cross of Calvary. The first three are Jewish trials and the second three are Roman. It is almost foolish to refer to these as trials for they made a mockery of both Jewish and Roman justice, inclusive to false arrest, false witnesses, false accusations, exclusion of evidence, inappropriate timing, cruel torture and ignored protocol of the laws on the books. As we will confirm, these trials are actually nothing more than kangaroo courts with a pre-determined outcome not only of man, but of God.

Jewish Trial #1 Before Annas (The Interrogation)

John 18:12-14 So the {Roman} cohort and the commander, and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, 13 and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. 14 Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.

- They led Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane to the palace of Annas, the former High Priest. He served as High Priest from 7-14 AD even though he was appointed for life by the Jews. Rome caused him to step down and appointed his son Caiaphas in 18 AD to control the populace; therefore the people still held Annas in great regard concerning power among them and considered him their real High Priest. He was a wealthy, powerful individual that controlled the buying and selling of the temple. When Jesus twice cleansed the temple, it was Annas that would have been the most angry for it cut into his profits and made him look bad before the Jews, being a man of greed. It is not a surprise to see this being the first stop for Jesus.
- As mentioned, this first trial would occur at Annas' palace. It was likely in one of the sections of that palace that Caiaphas, his son, resided; therefore Jesus was being processed through these early stages quickly. It clearly indicates their intentions in verse 14 that the verdict was pre-determined and the goal was to kill Jesus.

John 18:19-24 The high priest therefore questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. 20 Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. 21 "Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; behold, these know what I said." 22 And when He had said this, one of the officers standing by gave Jesus a blow, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" 23 Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" 24 Annas therefore sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

- Annas asks Jesus some generic questions concerning His teachings while with the apostles. Our Lord simply confirmed that He always taught openly in the public and was not hiding anything. It is almost like Annas wants to trip-up Jesus in some sort of blasphemy through self-incrimination. The burden of proof is not on Jesus, but on the “witnesses” that heard Him teach among the crowds.
- The High Priest’s henchmen did not like this and one of them smacked Jesus across the face, essentially saying, “How dare you talk this way to the High Priest!” Jesus did not let the guard get away with that, asking, “If I am wrong in this, then you tell me what I have done; otherwise why are you treating me like this?”
- While this was going on, Caiaphas was assembling certain members of the Sanhedrin that were well-aware of the dirty deeds which are about to come upon Jesus. His plan was to assemble the best false witnesses to testify against Jesus while His father, Annas, tries to tempt Jesus into blasphemy. With that in mind, Annas sent Jesus bound to his son for the advance of this scam.

Jewish Trial #2 Before Caiaphas (The grand jury)

Mark 14:55-65 Now 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. 56 For many were giving false testimony against Him, and {yet} their testimony was not consistent. 57 And some 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.'" 59 And not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.

- Caiaphas and his crony Sanhedrin buddies along with the false witnesses start railing their accusations against Jesus. There seems to be some trouble trying to get some of their witnesses to agree and that would not stand in this court.
 - a) Deut 19:15 "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.
 - b) Num 35:30 'If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death at the evidence of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.
- Finally there are a couple of witnesses that settle on an event that occurred three years prior in the ministry of Jesus. The event followed the first cleansing of the Temple.

John 2:18-21 The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?" 19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews therefore said, "It took

forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" 21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

- Notice that Jesus did not say that He was destroying the Temple, but that if they destroyed the Temple that He would raise it up in three days. They are twisting His words. And again He was referring to His body, not the temple, and to His resurrection, not the construction of the Temple. This was His response to their reprehensible behavior of running a dishonest money scam in the Temple by ripping of the worshippers of God.

Mark 14:60-62 And the high priest stood up {and came} forward and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do You make no answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" 61 But He kept silent, and made no answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed {One?}" 62 And 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."

- Jesus was not going to answer their foolish line of questioning, for even the false-witnesses testimony was not in full agreement. As He is being accused and remaining silent, the prophesied image of Isaiah 53:7 comes to mind. *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.* Jesus did not come to this juncture to defend Himself, but to die for the sins of all mankind.
- Caiaphas illegally presses Jesus to testify against Himself, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed {One?}" Matthew's account states in Matt 26:64 Jesus said to him, "You have said it {yourself} nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Caiaphas pressed Jesus for an answer as to whether He was the Christ or not, to which Jesus confidently affirmed that He was, backing it up with two well-known Messianic verses from the OT.
 - a) Dan 7:13 "...behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.
 - b) Ps 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet."
- This confirmed two things. First, that He was the Christ. Second, the next time the Jewish leadership will see Jesus after the resurrection will be when He comes back to judge the earth.

Mark 14:63-65 And tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? 64 "You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. 65 And some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers received Him with slaps {in the face.}

- We have to understand what blasphemy to the Jew is either reducing God down or elevating oneself to God's level. When Jesus refers to Himself as the Christ, it would not be accepted. Caiaphas and his men refused to recognize Jesus as the Christ; therefore this would be the charge they would use to confirm their desire to put Him to death. They lived in "opposite world", for the very thing they are to believe in would be the reason they used to put Jesus to death.
- Caiaphas went ballistic, tearing his clothes, closing the charge and asking "*What further need do we have of witnesses?*" The tearing of clothes by a Jew was considered a display of great anger or sadness (Gen 37:29; Judges 14:9; Acts 14:14). This also riled up the others around Him, provoking them to violence and condemnation. "He is worthy to die for this!" They spit on Him which was a great insult in that culture. They blindfolded Him and played smack the profit, asking "Prophecy who is hitting you!" They were out of control with anger, for they had reached their goal of a death-penalty charge and were ready to move toward a final verdict. For this to occur, they would have to meet before the entire Sanhedrin after sunrise.

Jewish Trial #3 Before the Sanhedrin (The conviction)

Luke 22:66-71 And when it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council {chamber,} saying, 67 "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; 68 and if I ask a question, you will not answer. 69 "But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." 70 And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." 71 And they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."

- It was now about 6 AM and the entire Sanhedrin was assembled. To appreciate what is occurring, it is necessary to understand who this Sanhedrin was. They are the Jewish Supreme court, numbering seventy in membership. Their origin was based in *Num 11:16 The LORD therefore said to Moses, "Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you.* When they assembled for judgment, it was in three semi-circles with the accused in the middle.
- It is with this in mind that we find Jesus being confronted by the entire Sanhedrin. They pressed Him for conformation of what was relayed from the High Priest and some of their colleagues. "Are You the Christ or not?" Jesus is quick to point out that they are slow to listen and negligent to allow Him to cross-examination. He confirmed that He would be seated at the right hand of God. They pressed again, "*Are You the Son of God,*

then?" Jesus admitted that He was, resulting in their final verdict and sentencing of death.

- They had the legal right to pronounce a death sentence, but could not carry it out without authorization from the Roman appointed governor. For this they would have to turn it over to Governor Pilate for sentencing with two major problems in mind.
- First, Pilate would only hear new cases in the morning which would not give much time for Jesus' trial. They would have to continue the process at a fast pace in order to complete it before the Passover weekend. If it was not done quickly, all the followers of Jesus would rise up and demand that He be released.
- Second, in Roman law the Governor could not sentence a Jew to death on the basis of violation to Hebrew Law. The Sanhedrin would have to come up with suitable Roman violations worthy of death to complete their plans. That is why there will also be three Roman trials as discussed in the beginning.

Application:

1. Being well-educated in the scriptures does not make you right with God.

Yes it is important to know the Bible, for it is the inspired word of God. It is the Bible that makes us wise unto salvation and draws us closer to God. Be careful not associate great knowledge with being right before God.

2. Being in the religious majority does not make you right with God.

Caiaphas was part of religious system that was a majority power. They thought they were doing the right thing by ganging up on Jesus because there was not a voice against it. There was nobody there to tell them "NO". There could have been a few people that might have spoken up, but of the 70 that judged, there resulted a convincing thumbs-down for the life of Jesus.

The same is true in the religions and denominations that exist around us. We tend to look at large numbers or groups and say, "They must be on the right track because they have a large building or thousands." Jesus said that many shall be called, but few are chosen. He also said that wide is the path that leads to destruction, but narrow is the way that leads to life. Be careful not to associate numbers with being right with God.

3. Being passionate about your cause does not make you right with God.

Annas, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin were passionate about their cause. Surely they must be right with God for they had a great passion about the task at hand. They were sincere, but sincerely wrong.

We need to understand that our passion can fall on the wrong side of rightness in God's eyes. He does not want us to base things on our passion, but our facts.

Being educated in the gospel of Christ, joining the minority of Christ in the church and being passionate about your service for Christ is what makes you right with God.