

The Mind of Christ

The Trials of Jesus – Part 2

INTRODUCTION:

- I. In our last lesson in our series entitled “The Mind of Christ,” we began a study on the trials of Jesus.
 - A. As we mention in that lesson, the only way we can fully understand the impact of these trials – both Jewish and Roman trials – we need to understand how these trials SHOULD have been conducted.
 1. According to Jewish law in New Testament times, capital trials (those in which the death penalty was a possibility) were always carried out by the Great Sanhedrin.
 - a. This supreme court of the Jews was presided over by the High Priest.
 - b. The remaining 70 members of the Sanhedrin came from a wide variety of religious backgrounds, including, scribes and Pharisees, Sadducees, priests and elders of the people.
 - c. In the three years leading up to His crucifixion, all these groups had become the enemies of Jesus.

- (1). They either saw Jesus as a threat to the religious orthodoxy of the day, or they saw Jesus as a threat to their religious and political power.
- B. But what is perhaps the most unique characteristic about the Sanhedrin is that it was ordered by Jewish law to act as counsel for the defense.
1. Even when it appeared that the man on trial was guilty, the Sanhedrin was obligated to search for ways to lawfully acquit the accused and find him innocent.
 2. To protect the accused from a biased and unfair trial, Jewish law prescribed several safeguards.
 - a. For example, Jewish law required the testimony of AT LEAST two witnesses to condemn the accused.
 - (1). These witnesses were always examined separately, but publicly. They were examined separately to prevent collusion, and they were examined publicly to allow their testimony to be challenged in an open forum.
 - (2). Furthermore, the testimony of every witness was required to be exactly the same as all the other witnesses when it came to every material fact in the case.

- (3). If there was ANY variance whatsoever between the testimony of witnesses, the testimony of ALL witnesses was thrown out and the accused was automatically acquitted.
- b. Furthermore, Jewish law prohibited the accused from being found guilty on the basis of his own testimony (or self-incriminating evidence).
 - (1). In fact, it was illegal to even ask the accused a question that might lead to self-incrimination.
 - c. In addition, capital cases in which the accused was found guilty could never begin and end on the same day.
 - (1). Jewish law required the judges of the Sanhedrin to spend the night in meditation and prayer as they reconsidered all the evidence leading to conviction of the accused.
 - (2). The purpose for this was to prevent a “rush to judgment,” and to urge the judges of the Sanhedrin to try to find some way to acquit the accused.
 - (3). Spending a night in meditation and prayer is also the reason why trials involving capital cases could never be held the day before the Sabbath or any feast day.

- d. Furthermore, Jewish law made it illegal for the Sanhedrin to convene at night to hold court in ANY type of crime – regardless of how serious the crime may be. All trials were required to be conducted during the daytime.
- e. The next morning, when the final vote was taken, members of the Sanhedrin were permitted to CHANGE their vote ONLY if they had previously voted to CONDEMN the accused. A judge who had previously voted to ACQUIT the accused could NOT change his vote. Under Jewish law, members of the Sanhedrin were allowed to change their vote ONLY if it was in FAVOR of the accused.
- f. And finally, there could never be a UNANIMOUS VOTE to condemn the accused. Jewish law required at least ONE VOTE for acquittal.
 - (1). If the vote was UNANIMOUS the proceedings were declared a mistrial because it was assumed that the accused had not received a fair and impartial trial.

BODY:

- I. Before we begin looking at the specifics of the Jewish trial of Jesus, let's take a moment to look at the various parts of this trial recorded in Scripture.

- A. The first part of the trial of Jesus began immediately after His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane.
1. Jesus was first brought before Annas.
 - a. **John 18:13-14** – *And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year. 14 Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.*
 - b. In the days of Jewish independence (before Roman occupation) those who were appointed to the office of High Priest were appointed for life.
 - c. But following Roman occupation, the office of High Priest became a pawn in a game of political intrigue and power.
 - d. High Priests were removed from office and new ones appointed whenever it was to Rome's advantage. In fact, High Priests came and went so often that Tiberius once said High Priests came and went, "like flies on a sore."
 2. Annas was no longer serving as High Priest, although he had served in the capacity a few years earlier. However, Annas was clearly the POWER behind the office of High Priest.

- a. One reason is because four of the sons of Annas had already served as High Priest, and others were in line to serve in the future.
 - b. But the most obvious reason why Annas influenced the decisions of the ruling High Priest is because Caiaphas was his son-in-law.
3. We're not told why Jesus was brought before Annas first, but we can safely speculate.
- a. Five days earlier (on Monday), Jesus entered the Temple and drove out the money changers and all those who were buying and selling sacrificial animals.
 - b. The money changers and the merchants who had set up their booths in the Temple courtyard were there by permission of Annas.
 - (1). In fact, these booths were called, "The Booths of Annas," or "The Bazaar of Annas."
 - (2). These money changers and merchants all paid rent to Annas for the privilege of setting up shop in the Temple courtyards, and they were required to pay Annas a commission on all their profits.

- c. When Jesus drove these men out of the Temple, the actions of Jesus were considered a direct attack against the religious corruption and greed of Annas and his entire family.
 - d. So, it seems only natural that Annas would want Jesus brought to him first so the former High Priest could gloat over the downfall of this presumptuous Galilean – especially since Annas was the driving force behind the plot to arrest Jesus and condemn Him to death.
- B. The second part of the trial of Jesus took place when He was brought before Caiaphas, the ruling High Priest, and the members of the Sanhedrin.
1. **Mark 14:53-54** – *And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. 54 But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.*
 2. In the darkness of the pre-dawn hours, the High Priest and members of the Sanhedrin gather to hear the testimony of various witnesses.

- a. Of course, this was obviously illegal. Under Jewish law, no part of a trial could be held at night – especially the examination of witnesses.
 - b. The law required witnesses to be examined in public forum so that their testimony could be challenged.
 - c. The fact that this examination took place in the dead of night would NOT allow for a public forum. Most everyone in Jerusalem was sleeping.
- C. The third part of the trial took place early the next morning when the Sanhedrin officially met to judge Jesus.
1. The purpose here would be to conduct a very brief “OFFICIAL” trial and arrive at an “OFFICIAL” verdict – a verdict that would obviously find Jesus guilty of crimes worthy of death under Jewish law.
 2. This part of the trial is mentioned by Matthew, Mark and Luke.
 - a. **Matthew 27:1** – *When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death.*
 - b. **Mark 15:1** – *Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole*

council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate.

- c. **Luke 22:66-71** – *As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying, 67 "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will by no means believe. 68 And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go. 69 Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God." 70 Then they all said, "Are You then the Son of God?" So He said to them, "You rightly say that I am." 71 And they said, "What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."*

3. Ordinarily, this would have been the end of the matter. The accused would be taken away and executed.
- a. However, the Talmud says that, “forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the judgment of capital cases was taken away from Israel.”
- (1). This meant, to execute a man, the accused must be tried and found worthy of death under ROMAN LAW, not just Jewish Law.

(2). Therefore, it was necessary to take Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, and have Pilate condemn Jesus to death.

b. But, here's the irony of this whole situation. It was at the time that Jesus began His ministry that Rome took away the right of Jewish authorities to execute a man under Jewish law.

c. If Rome had NOT taken away the right of execution, Jesus would have been put to death according to Jewish forms of execution (such as hanging, burning, strangulation, or stoning), all of which would have been contrary to prophecy!

(1). Jewish forms of execution would have either broken His bones (as in stoning), or would have killed Jesus without His blood being shed (such as hanging, burning or strangulation).

(2). Clearly, the hand of God was at work in even the METHOD by which Jesus would be executed.

II. The ACTUAL pre-dawn trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin broke two very specific laws governing all trials of capital crimes – the trial was being conducted during the night, and on the day before the Sabbath.

- A. The first order of business was a search for witnesses on whose testimony Jesus could be found guilty. Apparently, a number of witnesses were PREPARED to testify, but none of the testimonies of these witnesses agreed.
1. **Mark 14:55-56** – *Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. 56 For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree.*
 2. When the accusers of Jesus couldn't find witnesses whose testimony could agree, it became necessary to produce two witnesses whose FABRICATED testimony WOULD agree.
 - a. **Mark 14:57-58** – *Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, 58 "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.'"*
 3. The evidence given by these two witnesses was a complete misstatement and misunderstanding of something Jesus said, which, by the way, would have been self-incriminating, and therefore illegal.

- a. At the BEGINNING of His ministry, Jesus cleansed the Temple of money changers and merchants in much the same manner as He did at the END of His ministry
- b. During that first incident, Jesus was asked for some sign from God showing that He had the authority to drive out these merchants.
- c. The answer Jesus gave was this: **John 2:19** – *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."*
 - (1). John adds this bit of commentary: **John 2:21-22** – *But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.*
- d. However, this would hardly be something Jewish leaders would condemn a man for saying. If anything, they would be more inclined to declare Him delusional and mentally unstable.
- e. In any event, the members of the Sanhedrin didn't even bother to consider this testimony, realizing it was completely useless to condemn a man to death.

- f. Furthermore, Mark says that even these two false witnesses, who had obviously been coached, didn't even agree. **(Mark 14:59)**
4. Things were clearly not going well for the prosecution. There was simply no reliable testimony upon which they could condemn Jesus. Therefore, the High Priest had to find another way of finding Jesus worthy of death.
- B. Throwing aside all respect for Jewish law which said a man could NOT be condemned on the basis of his OWN testimony (self-incriminating evidence), the High Priest asks Jesus if He is the Messiah.
1. Without any hesitation, Jesus responds: **Mark 14:61b-62** – *Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" 62 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."*
 - a. This proclamation of Jesus is taken from a Messianic prophecy about the Lord found in Daniel chapter 7.
 - b. **Daniel 7:13-14** – *"I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and*

glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."

- c. This prophecy isn't speaking about the Lord's return to EARTH – it's not speaking about the second coming of Christ – but rather the Lord's return to His home in HEAVEN, where He would be seated at the right hand of God.
- d. This prophecy says when Jesus returned to heaven He was given dominion (the authority and power to rule or reign), he was given glory, and he was given a kingdom – an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and a kingdom that will never be destroyed.
- d. In his book entitled "The Mind of Jesus," William Barclay paraphrases the proclamation Jesus made before the Sanhedrin, and writes this: "Jesus is saying, 'At this moment I may seem to be in your power. At this moment you are gloatingly certain that you are going to eliminate me by having me nailed to a cross. This moment looks like your triumph and my defeat. But the day will come when you will see me again, and I shall be sitting in glory on the throne of

God. At this moment you are the judges and I am the judged; the day will come in the heavenly places when I shall be the judge and when you will be on trial for your sins before me.

At this moment you think that you are breaking me; the time will come when you will see me as the King of glory.”

2. Make no mistake about it, Jesus boldly and courageously proclaimed Himself to be the MESSIAH – the King of kings and Lord of lords – the very SON OF GOD.
- C. As far as the Jewish authorities were concerned, they had all they needed – they could now officially charge Jesus with BLASPHEMY!
1. But they knew that the charge of blasphemy would NOT be enough to bring Jesus before Pilate.
 - a. Rome had a policy of tolerance concerning the religious beliefs and practices of all people under Roman rule – as long as those beliefs and practices were not perceived to be a threat to the Pax Romana (Roman Peace).
 - b. Therefore, because of this policy, Roman governors like Pilate would not involve themselves with religious issues and disputes.
 - c. In other words, Pilate would insist that the Jewish leaders deal with their own internal religious issues.

2. So, bringing the Lord before Pilate over the claim Jesus made that He was the Christ, the very Son of God, would hardly be something Pilate would concern himself with.
3. Therefore, the Jewish religious leaders would have to bring some other charge against Jesus that would be sufficient enough for Pilate to become involved, and hopefully sentence Jesus to be crucified.
 - a. In our next lesson, we'll see what accusations these religious leaders bring against Jesus, and what Pilate's reaction was to this obviously trumped up charge.

III. Everything about this Jewish portion of the trials of Jesus violates every ordinance of Jewish law concerning matters of crimes worthy of death.

A. As we said before, the Sanhedrin was to act as counsel for the defense – and as such, should have been trying to defend Jesus against unjust accusations.

1. But that CERTAINLY WASN'T the case here.
 - a. No two witnesses agreed in their testimony – which clearly showed the testimony of these witnesses to be false.
 - b. And, from the very beginning, Jesus was assumed to be GUILTY – even before the evidence of witnesses was heard.

- (1). Jesus should not have even been arrested, let alone be on trial, until the evidence against Him was thoroughly examined and proven to be credible and material.
2. There were other violations of Jewish law.
 - a. Members of the Sanhedrin convened in an illegal PLACE (the house of the High Priest), at an illegal TIME (during the darkness of the pre-dawn hours), and on an illegal DAY (the day before the Sabbath).
 - b. Jesus was asked questions specifically designed to cause Jesus to incriminate Himself on the basis of His OWN testimony – and would eventually be judged worthy of death on the basis of His own testimony.
 - c. Twice Jesus was subjected to physical violence – something Jewish law strictly forbade concerning ANY man on trial.
 - (1). The first incident occurred when Jesus was brought before Annas. **John 18:19-22** – *The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine. 20 Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. 21 Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me*

what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said." 22 And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, "Do You answer the high priest like that?"

- (2). The second incident happened while Jesus was waiting to be brought before the “official” meeting of the Sanhedrin at daybreak – before He was LEGALLY on trial. **Luke 22:63-65** – *Now the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him. 64 And having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, "Prophecy! Who is the one who struck You?" 65 And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him.*

- d. And finally, when the verdict of guilt was reached, it was done without the members of the Sanhedrin spending the required night in meditation and prayer to review the case, and it was by UNANIMOUS vote. **Mark 14:64** – *And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.*

- (1). Jewish law required capital trials in which the accused was found guilty by a unanimous vote to be declared a

mistrial because the verdict would have clearly been prejudicial.

3. Some legal authorities in Jewish law have said the Sanhedrin violated more than TEN laws.
 - a. So, it was clear from the very BEGINNING that these men would go to ANY length to find Jesus guilty and condemn Him to death.

IV. However, there are some important things we learn about the Mind of Christ in all this.

A. Three important things stand out.

1. First, Jesus maintains His DIGNITY.
 - a. Throughout this entire ordeal, Jesus never loses control.
 - b. While His accusers rant and rave, and make all kinds of emotional displays – showing a TREMENDOUS lack of dignity – Jesus maintains His dignity to the very end.
2. Second, Jesus maintains His COURAGE.
 - a. When asked if He were the Messiah, Jesus answers CLEARLY and CONCISELY.
 - b. He knew the question was designed to incriminate Him, and find Him guilty of blasphemy, but He answered the question

anyway – COURAGEOUSLY, even though He knew it would mean His death.

3. And finally, once again, Jesus maintains COMPLETE CONFIDENCE.
 - a. Jesus knew He would ultimately triumph; and He knew , without ANY DOUBT WHATSOEVER, that there would be GLORY beyond the cross.

CONCLUSION:

I.

- A. Sometimes we simply read passages like this without fully understanding WHY Jesus willingly went to the cross.
 1. Without question, the primary reason Jesus willingly went to the cross was for you and me. And perhaps nowhere other than in the book of Hebrews do we find passage after passage that speaks of this great sacrifice.
 - a. **Hebrews 2:9** – *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”*

- b. **Hebrews 2:14-15, 17** – *“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage... 17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation [satisfaction] for the sins of the people.”*
- c. **Hebrews 9:12-14** – *“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”*
- d. **Hebrew 9:28** – *“...so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.”*
- e. **Hebrews 10:10** – *“... we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”*

- f. **Hebrews 10:14** – *“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”*
2. So, without question, Jesus gave His life on the cross to bear our sins and to shed His blood so that we might be sanctified forever. But the Hebrew writer gives us one more reason why Jesus went to the cross willingly.
3. Immediately after giving us in chapter eleven a list of all the faithful men and women of God who endured to much suffering to faithfully serve God, the writer of Hebrews says this:
 - a. **Hebrews 12:1-2** – *“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*
 - b. Jesus endured the cross for you and me, despising the shame and all the horrible suffering He was about to endure, because of “the joy that was set before Him.”

- c. Jesus could willingly and courageously go to the cross of Calvary because every step He took would bring Him just one step closer to home – heaven.
 4. And so, with the joy of knowing that He was only hours away from going home, Jesus willingly placed Himself into the hands of His enemies, and moved toward the cross.
- II. We should be outraged at injustice of the Jewish and Roman trials of Jesus.
- A. This was the greatest miscarriage of justice in the history of the entire world – the pure, innocent, holy and sinless Son of God was unjustly accused of sins and crimes of which He was never guilty.
 1. But as outraged as we might be over this terrible miscarriage of justice, there is something that should stir our souls even more.
 - a. Our blatant refusal to take advantage of the GREAT SACRIFICE Jesus paid for you and me.
 - b. He WILLINGLY died on the cross, and innocent man, for you and for me – and IRONICALLY, WE'RE the ones who are GUILTY of sins and crimes worthy of death.
 - c. WE are the ones who deserve to die at the hand of God for our sins and rebellion against God and against His Son, Jesus Christ.

- d. But, He died for us – for YOU and for ME.
2. And you know why? It wasn't JUST to forgive us of our sins. It was to forgive us of our sins so that WE could have the SAME JOY SET BEFORE US that was set before Him – knowing that in the end, we're going HOME to heaven!
 3. Jesus willingly died on the cross so He could bring you home when you die.
 4. Do you want to go home when you die?
 - a. If you DO, and you've never been baptized into Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, then you need to do that today.
 - b. And if you're a child of God who has taken the wrong road on your way home, then do what you need to do to get back on the right path today.