

## The Mistrial of Jesus Christ (Part 1)

**Text:** Mark 14:43-65

### Introduction:

1. The trial of Christ prior to His crucifixion divides into two phases:
  - The Ecclesiastical Trial before the religious leaders.
  - The Civil Trial before the Roman leaders.
2. Each of these two phases had three episodes:
  - The Ecclesiastical Trial
    - The trial before Annas (John 18:12-14).
    - The trial before Caiaphas and Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54, 63-65; John 18:19-24).
    - The Final trial before Sanhedrin in a brief meeting after dawn for formal sentencing (Matt. 27:1-2; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71). Matthew and Mark mention it only very briefly but Luke records the encounter in greater detail.
  - The Civil Trial
    - The first trial before Pilate (Luke 23:1-5).
    - The trial before Herod (Luke 23:6-12).
    - The final trial before Pilate (Matt. 27:11-26; Mark 15:1-15; Luke 23:13-25, John 18:28-40).
3. In this lesson we will study from Christ's arrest in the garden through to His sentencing before the Sanhedrin.

### I. AN ILLEGAL ARREST (VS. 43-52)

In the arrest of Christ, we note that He was:

#### A. Betrayed in the Garden (Vs. 43-52)

1. The Betrayers Identity (Vs. 43a)
  - a. "Judas, one of the twelve" = all the Gospel accounts mention the fact that Judas was one of the twelve Apostles. It serves to emphasize the shocking reality that the betrayer of Christ came from one of Christ's own inner circle.
  - b. By this stage, Judas is indwelt by Satan himself and is being controlled by His diabolical power and influence (See John 13:27). Think of it. In many ways in the garden that night, Satan and Christ came face to face. The battle of the ages between Lucifer and the Lord of glory was about to erupt. Little did the serpent know that when the meek and mild Son of God went to that cross, He would be dealt a fatal blow from which he would never recover (Gen. 3:15).
2. The Betrayer's Co-conspirators (Vs. 43b)
  - a. The size of the mob – "a great multitude"

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- b. The weaponry of the mob – “swords and staves”. The ‘swords’ were the Roman swords typically carried by the Roman soldiers. John 18:12 reveals that Roman soldiers under a commanding officer were present. The ‘staves’ were wooden clubs and the standard weapon of the Jewish temple guards. John’s Gospel also notes that the mob carried “torches and lanterns” (John 18:3).
  - c. The organisers of the mob – “from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders”. The three groups that made up the Jewish Sanhedrin are mentioned. Luke 22:52 mentions that some of the Sanhedrin members were present.
  - d. Note: The composition of the arresting party was made up of:
    - i. Temple police.
    - ii. Roman soldiers.
    - iii. Religious leaders.
    - iv. Regular people.
3. The Betrayer’s Treachery (Vs. 44-45)
- a. A pre-arranged signal (Vs. 44). The word ‘token’ means “a sign or signal; a sign given according to agreement” (Strong’s).
  - b. A feigned friendship (Vs. 45).
    - i. “Master, master” = the word is ‘rabbi’ meaning ‘teacher’. It was the term of respect a disciple would use when addressing his teacher/mentor. The repetition of the term “indicates personal warmth in the greeting of Judas. He acted greatly delighted to find Jesus.” (Edmond Hiebert)
    - ii. “and kissed him” = the word for ‘kiss’ is a compound form of the verb in Greek indicating that the kiss “was given with a decided show of affection (“kissed him fervently”))” (Hiebert). It means to kiss much or kiss tenderly. Imagine how that would have felt for Christ? Imagine the evil, Satanic presence that was with Judas at this time. Luke’s Gospel reveals that as Judas drew near to kiss the Saviour, Christ asked, “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” Jesus then asked a second question straight after Judas had kissed him – “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” (Matt. 26:50).

### B. Arrested in the Garden (Vs. 46-49)

- 1. Sinful hands laid hold of Him (Vs. 46)
  - a. Think of it! The Creator in the hands of the creature; the Son of God in the hands of the sons of men; the Sinless in the hands of the sinful. Heaven gasped as sinful, evil men “laid their hands on him, and took him.” It is no wonder that Peter, in his great sermon on the Day of Pentecost declared, “Him (Christ), being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of

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God, ye have taken, and **by wicked hands have crucified and slain:**” Acts 2:23

- b. From this point onwards, the Son of God would be at the mercy of ruthless sinful hands. The crucifixion of Christ would be the crowning point of man’s sinful rebellion against his Creator.
- 2. Misguided hands defended Him (Vs. 47)
  - a. Peter, in a vain attempt to live up to his claim of loyalty, aimed his sword at one of the high priest’s servants named Malchus (John 18:10).
  - b. Jesus responded to Peter with the words “Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matt. 26:52). John’s Gospel adds, “Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”
  - c. Peter was actually standing between His Saviour and the Divine will of the Father. Trying to fight the Lord’s battles with the weapons of the flesh will never achieve anything for Christ’s cause.
  - d. Note: Our Lord’s words also have great significance for the church in relation to the church and the use of the sword. Christ made it clear that the literal sword was not to be used by His followers to advance His cause on earth. The church only uses one sword to conquer and that is the spiritual sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Eph. 6:17).
- 3. Sinless hands submitted to them (Vs. 48-49)
  - a. Christ challenged his persecutors (Vs. 48). They were approaching Him as if He were some sort of thief. A ‘thief’ “normally referred to an armed bandit or brigand who would violently resist arrest and try to escape” (Macarthur)
  - b. Christ yielded to His Father (Vs. 49). Christ knew that this was all in the Divine plan of God as foretold in the Scriptures. Christ was not helpless and powerless. He said himself, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Matt. 26:53-54) A legion was around 6,000 man so this means approximately 72,000 angels! Just one angel was powerful enough to slay 185,000 of the Assyrian army (2 Kings 19:35)!

### C. Deserted in the Garden (Vs. 50-52)

- 1. Forsaken by the named disciples (Vs. 50). Remember, they had all promised that they would not forsake Him (Vs. 31). Alexander Maclaren writes, “Their flight may teach us to place little reliance on our emotions, however genuine and deep. We keep close to Him, not because our poor fingers grasp His hand – for that grasp is

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always feeble but because His strong and gentle hand holds us with a grasp which nothing can loosen.”

2. Forsaken by an unnamed disciple (Vs. 51-52). Many suggest that this was Mark. That is possible. However, if the identity of the individual was important for us to know, the Holy Spirit would have included it. It seems Mark’s primary purpose for including this incident (only in Mark’s Gospel) was to further demonstrate just how entirely forsake the Lord Jesus was at this point by all those loyal to Him. Christ would suffer alone – alone amidst the angry mob, alone before the religious leaders, alone in Pilate’s hall, alone before Herod, alone under the lash of the Roman scourge, alone in the soldier’s barracks surrounded by cruel mocking and violence, alone on the road to Calvary, alone on Golgotha’s hill and then alone for the final three hours on the cross where God the Father turned His back on the God the Son and Christ’s heart rending cry penetrated the air – “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

## **II. AN ILLEGAL TRIAL (VS. 53-61a)**

The trial of Christ from start to finish was a complete miscarriage of justice. Both Jewish and Roman law was broken as evil men would settle for nothing less than the death of God’s Son.

### **A. The Assembly was Unjust (Vs. 53)**

1. Historical background to the Jewish trials.
  - a. The Jewish Sanhedrin
    - i. Many small Sanhedrin’s in each locality typically made up of 23 elders with a “chief ruler” These served as courts to uphold the Jewish law.
    - ii. The Great Sanhedrin was located in Jerusalem consisting of 71 members including the High Priest. This Council was the final court of Appeal, and the highest ruling body of the nation of Israel. It would be similar to a “high court”.
  - b. The Sanhedrin’s Code of Jurisprudence
    - i. In legal terms, the Law demanded three things: publicity of the trial, entire liberty of defence allowed to the accused, and a guarantee against the dangers of testimony.
    - ii. At least two witnesses required (Deut. 17:6; 19:15).
    - iii. Their axiom was “The Sanhedrin is to save, not destroy life.” John Phillips writes, “The well-established precedent in a capital case among the Jews was first to look for evidence that would acquit the accused. Only later was search made for incriminating testimony.”

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- iv. No criminal trial could be carried through the night, nor even in the afternoon.
- v. The simple confession of an individual against himself, or the declaration, however renowned, would not decide a condemnation.
- vi. The Judges who condemned a criminal had to fast all day.
- vii. The condemned was not executed the same day on which the sentence was passed.
- viii. The property of the accused was not confiscated but passed over to his heirs.
- ix. Voting was from junior members to senior so that the lower members might not be influenced by the highest.
- x. If the Sanhedrin voted unanimously for a verdict of guilty, the accused was supposed to be set free since the necessary element of mercy was lacking.

2. This therefore was an illegal assembly of the Sanhedrin.

### **B. The Predetermination was Unjust (Vs. 55)**

- 1. The Sanhedrin, which was supposed to act as judge and jury in an impartial manner, took the unprecedented and corrupt step of also acting as prosecutor against the accused. In fact, they weren't really acting as judges at all but as prosecutors.
- 2. Dr. Edershiem: "The Sanhedrin did not and could not originate charges. It only investigated those brought before it." This court originated the charges as well as tried the case. The Court became both the prosecution and the judge of the case.
- 3. The fact they "sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death" reveals that the outcome of this trial had already been decided before it even started. It was a kangaroo court, a mock trial, to try and give the appearance that justice was being served.
- 4. Maclaren: "The criminal is condemned before He is tried. The judges have made up their minds before they sit, and the Sanhedrin is not a court of justice, but a slaughter-house, where murder is done under the sanction of law."

### **C. The Accusations were Unjust (Vs. 56-61a)**

- 1. Many false witnesses testify against Christ "but their witness agreed not together." Finally, the case settles on two witnesses (Matt. 26:60) who misquote and misrepresent a statement of our Lord's concerning destroying the temple and raising it in three days (See John 2:19-22). "But neither so did their witness agree together." The fact they couldn't find any incriminating evidence against Christ is because there was none! Their desperate search for something with which to accuse Christ was a testament itself to the sinlessness of Christ.

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2. “It is harder to agree on a consistent lie than to tell the simple truth.” (R.A. Cole)
3. Christ is silent in the face of false accusation, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7 “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”
4. O.T. law on false witnesses: Deuteronomy 19:15-21 “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; **Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.** And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”

### III. AN ILLEGAL SENTENCE (VS. 61B-65)

#### A. The High Priest’s Question (Vs. 61b)

1. The High Priest intervened as the proceedings of the court were not going in the desired direction. The inability of the Sanhedrin to provide a coherent testimony against Christ meant that Caiaphas had to try and salvage the agenda.
2. The High Priest’s question touched both Christ’s claim to Messiahship and Sonship.
3. Note: When the accusation keeps twisting and changing, it is a sure sign of an unjust trial.

#### B. The Saviour’s Declaration (Vs. 62)

1. A personal affirmation – “I am” (Vs. 62a) Jesus boldly affirms the truth concerning His Person. He was indeed the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God. “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, **I am.**”
2. A prophetic prediction – “and ye shall see” (Vs. 62b) In language that closely harks back to the imagery of Daniel’s prophecy (7:13-14), Christ declares His future return as Judge and Sovereign. This was a powerful warning to the religious leaders. There is coming a

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day when these evil men will stand trial before the very One they wickedly and unjustly tried, condemned and crucified.

### **C. The Counsel's Determination (Vs. 63-64)**

1. The High Priest breaks the Sanhedrin's legal code and influences the outcome of the trial from the top down. He rends his clothes in a "mock show of grief in the presence of "blasphemy". The truth is, Christ's answer was exactly what he was hoping for." (Hiebert)  
Interestingly, according to the law, the high priest was forbidden to rend his clothes (Lev. 21:10). This false high priest rent his clothes and condemned Christ but in just a few hours, Christ, the True and Great High Priest would rend the temple veil in two, signifying the end of Judaism.
2. The High Priest makes no attempt to examine Christ's claims but resorts to a sentence of blasphemy. In reality, the high priest and the council were the blasphemers. Christ has spoken absolute truth concerning the reality of His Person

### **D. The People's Violent Actions (Vs. 65)**

1. They spat on Christ (Vs. 65a). Spitting the greatest form of contempt.
2. They struck Christ (Vs. 65b)
  - a. As blows rained down on Christ at that hour, it seemed He was on trial before men. In reality, sinful man was on trial that day as man's sinful depravity was revealed in all its wretchedness and ugliness before the Lamb of God.
  - b. Maclaren: "His sad, loving eyes, wide open below their bandage, saw and pitied each rude smiter, even as He sees us all. They were and are eyes of infinite tenderness, ready to beam forgiveness; but they were and are the eyes of the Judge, who sees and repays His foes, as those who smite Him will one day find out."
3. They scorned Christ (Vs. 65b)

## **Conclusion:**

1. Are you saved? Can you now see what Christ went through in order to be able to save you from sin?
2. Are you upholding Biblical principles of justice in your life as a Christian in relation to others?