

Dentwater Bible Church

Resurrection Sunday

April 21, 2019



Ascension by Rembrandt Cir. 1636

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SIX TRIALS OF JESUS

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THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS PLOT TO KILL JESUS

Mark 14:1-2

¹After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.

² But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people (KJV).

The events of Passover week had transpired to the point where Jesus was preparing for His sacrifice on the Passover thereby giving His life for the world's people. While His sacrifice would be available to the entire population of the earth it would only be effective to those who would accept His gift of eternal life. Chapter's 14 and 15 of the book of Mark describe the betrayal, arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus. This has come to be known as the Passion from come the Latin word for "suffer." There is an overriding theme of abandonment that comes out in chapter 14. The prophet Isaiah foretold this seven centuries before the actual Passion of Jesus when he said

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."

Isaiah 53:4-6

⁴Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (ASV, 1901).

The events in Mark's narration let us know that this point in time was two days prior to the feast of Passover. One point of differentiation that is important to understand is the two systems of counting time. Roman and Jewish reckoning started the day at different times. The Jews began the day at sunset and the Romans at midnight, which is what is in use throughout most of the world today. This difference in starting the day is somewhat complicating in evaluating the principle events of Passover week linking them one to another. Mark's use of time is observing the Jewish reckoning. Modern precision of reckoning the time of day make it difficult to read back into the gospel accounts, written at a time when no standardization of timepieces, or exactness in recording of hours and minutes was available. The difference between Roman and Jewish days as well as modern time precision render the slight difference between time calculation of the events of Passion week understandable.

The Passover was a festival of the Lord ordained in Egypt about 1445 B.C. when Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt. The Passover meal is eaten on the evening of the 15th of Nisan (March/April) and is referred to as Abib. It celebrated the event where unprotected first born of all

humans and animals were killed. God promised Moses that He would not harm any of the Israelites, but in order for them to be protected they had to follow a very specific process during the tenth plague in which all the first-born of animals and people would be put to death. If the Jews followed the Lord's instruction explicitly they would be delivered from the death that all the first-born would experience. The Children of Israel were "saved" from the death of the destroyer when he would "pass over" their homes.

In accordance with this the Jews celebrated the Passover, which was one of the three pilgrim festivals wherein all Jewish males were required to attend. As a result, there were thousands of Jews in Jerusalem at this time from all over the Roman Empire to comply with the Law. The normal population of Jerusalem was about 50,000 and during Passover week it would swell to more than 250,000. The unblemished lamb or goat to be eaten was killed on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan and would be eaten after sundown, which began the Jewish new day of the 15th of Nisan. No work was to be done on either the 14th or the 15th. The day that Mark refers to is probably Monday or Tuesday of Passion week.

THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES OF THE SANHEDRIN HAD DECIDED TO KILL JESUS.

John 11:47-53

⁴⁷The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many signs. ⁴⁸If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. ⁴⁹But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, ⁵⁰nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. ⁵¹Now this he said not of himself: but, being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation; ⁵²and not for the nation only, but that he might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad. ⁵³So from that day forth they took counsel that they might put him to death (ASV, 1901).

They were fearful that all people who believed on Jesus and followed Him would riot if He were unjustly killed. This then would cause them to lose their powerful political position with the Romans perhaps even losing their meager remnants of their sovereignty. They met in an emergency session to plot Jesus' death. Their political position with Rome was precarious at best. Their present course of action had been to disapprove of Jesus, seek to excommunicate Him and engage in blasphemous teaching countering Jesus' truthful exposition of the Scriptures. It was simply not working as thousands of people continued to follow Him and sought His miraculous healing and clear teaching. Not only did they fear Rome taking away their Temple and their nation but also, they knew the people would riot if they openly killed Him without a just cause. This would also bring the wrath of Rome quickly upon them as soldiers came to quell the rioting citizens.

Caiaphas the High Priest had been appointed by the Romans and was in the office from A.D. 18 to 36. It was his decision to sacrifice Jesus that had to take place in order to preserve Rome's favor. He viewed the other Sanhedrin members as ignorant. In offering his direction in killing Jesus he was arguing that the ends justified the means. He stated that if a person were regarded as worthless then that person could be sacrificed for the common good and even handed over to the hostile Gentiles. Otherwise such an act should have been contrary to Jewish principles. This was the crafty manner they decided to utilize in defending their plan to kill Him. So, Caiaphas authorized the killing of Jesus not realizing that it was God the Father directing him to sacrifice Jesus for the sins of the world.

JUDAS AGREES TO BETRAY JESUS

Mark 14:10-11

¹⁰ And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. ¹¹ And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him (KJV).

Mark reports with remarkable restraint the unspeakable treason that Judas showed toward Jesus. As Judas approached the chief priests they were delighted to find an accomplice within Jesus circle of followers to betray Him. This was an answer to their question of how to charge Him. Determining the motive behind Judas' betrayal of Jesus is an age-old question. It is quite likely that Judas expected Jesus to establish the Messianic Kingdom during His lifetime. When Mary broke the bottle of perfume and anointed Jesus for His death he realized that this would not occur. He might have been looking for a position in the new government and now realized that the Kingdom Jesus spoke of was Spiritual not physical at that time. In his greed and love for money he decided that the best course of action was to sell the opportunity to the chief priests so they could capture Jesus. One way to detect evil in any matter is to ask who profits from it financially, and Judas profited from the betrayal. So if we follow the money we can see Judas' motive.

The Sanhedrin were only too pleased to provide him with some money for the opportunity to capture Him. It is important to note that Judas was the only non-Galilean member of the apostles. He may have actually been a spy for the Sanhedrin all along. This would give him some additional reason to believe that he remained an outsider. In actuality God was orchestrating the events using the sins of Judas as well as the religious authorities to accomplish His goal of providing the perfect sacrifice to cleanse the heavenly tabernacle and provide for the salvation of all of the human beings on this earth. The plan of God does not excuse the perpetrators sins even though God used them to accomplish His goal.

Merrill Unger has observed a unique fusion of divine sovereignty and human free will in Judas as he carried out his own greed and animosity as well as God's plan in the execution of Jesus. It is important to note that it was Judas who went to the Sanhedrin not the other way around. Nevertheless is it quite apparent that the divine grace of God uses even human evil for His saving purposes.

The plan was set to capture Jesus at the perfect time. Until now Jesus was leaving the city of Jerusalem each night and spending the night in Bethany presumable with Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Now with Jesus staying in the city the authorities could capture Him at night without arousing the ire of the general population and thereby preserving the peace.

While Jesus was addressing Peter, James, and John for sleeping and then asking them to continue to sleep Judas appeared with an armed mob of Romans as well as the chief priests, scribes and the elders. Consider who is arriving beside the betrayer Judas. The Romans, chief priests, scribes and the Sanhedrin (elders). Even though the Romans had occupied Israel since the siege in 63 B.C. they allowed the standing government to conduct the affairs of state. The only activities for which the Romans sought to be involved were the collection of taxes and capital punishment. They maintained oversight in the death sentences so as to control potential riots, which would impair the Pax Romana (Peace of Rome) they sought to preserve.

The Sanhedrin (elders) was the High Court of Justice, the Supreme tribunal of the Jews, and was known to number seventy-one members. They sat as judges in Israelite trials having legislative, executive and judicial powers. They constituted the national parliament as well as the other branches of government known to modern western governmental bodies. Their principle laws came from the Torah (first five books of the Bible), the rabbinic law known as the Talmud and the Mishnah. This group violated all their laws to arrest, charge, try and execute Jesus. It is important to see how people driven by envy and threatened will embrace hatred so strong that it surpasses their own stated values.

Violation One

Even *before* Jesus' trial began the law was broken because His arrest was illegal. The Jewish law prohibited any part of a legal proceeding in capital offenses to take place at night, and Jesus was arrested at night.

"A capital offense must be tried during the day and suspended at night" (Mishnah in "Sanhedrin" Vol.1)

THE SIGN OR TOKEN

Mark 14:44-45

⁴⁴ And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely. ⁴⁵ And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him (KJV).

The token or sign that the Jews needed to signalize the moment to arrest Jesus would be a kiss. Judas had told the crowd to arrest the man to whom he would greet with a kiss. After they saw this they would lead Him away under guard. This was a Sanhedrin arrest not a Roman arrest. Jesus had not violated any Roman laws. Roman soldiers were there in case there was a riot. Judas pointed Jesus out through the common mid-eastern greeting of a kiss. This was not to identify Jesus but to certify that the one he kissed was Jesus as Judas had agreed to be His formal accuser in the trial and this was the legal process of certifying the relationship between the accuser and defendant for trial purposes.

THE APPREHENSION

Mark 14:46-49

⁴⁶ And they laid their hands on him, and took him. ⁴⁷ And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. ⁴⁸ And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with |clubs| to take me ⁴⁹ I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled. (KJV)?

They did not arrest Jesus in the Temple all week as He was teaching, healing, and confronting the Jewish authorities and to a lesser extent the Herodians. Even though they wanted to apprehend Him they feared the people and a riot during the day (Mark 14:19).

They instead in violation of their own laws came at night under the influence of the prince of darkness Satan himself. Jesus is then seized and it is anything but an orderly arrest based upon proper legal

authorization. Mark does not identify the sword bearer but John's gospel does (John 18:10-11). It was Peter who drew the sword *and smote a servant (Malchus) of the high priest, and cut off his ear*. Peter was probably trying to cut off Malchus' head and missed displaying the fidelity to Jesus he stressed earlier that night. Luke records that Jesus miraculously healed the ear (Luke 22:51). John further goes on to describe Jesus' words to Peter, "*Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*" In other words, Jesus declares these events as foreordained and must proceed.

Then Jesus said to them, "*Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with |clubs| to take me?*" Jesus did not resist them but offered a protest for the excessive display of armed force they brought against Him. He said they acted as though they came out against an armed robber. He was not an insurrectionist who acted in hiding but a recognized religious teacher. Every day that week He appeared openly among them in Jerusalem teaching (Mark 11:17) in the temple courts (Mark 11:11) but they did not arrest Him (Mark 12:12; 14:1-2). Arresting Him like a criminal at night in a secluded place showed their cowardice and uncaring attitude toward their own law. More importantly it clearly demonstrated that they did not know who He really was. But this happened because *the scriptures must be fulfilled* (Psalms 22:7-8, 14, 16-17; Isaiah 50:6, 53:3, 7-9, 12).

THE ELEVEN FLEE IN FEAR

Mark 14:50

⁵⁰ *And they all forsook him, and fled (KJV).*

Just hours earlier they all swore to never deny Him led by Peter's affirmation of willingness to die with Him. Now in the heat of the moment they all leave Him. Judas betrays Jesus and the eleven desert Him. Therefore, all of Jesus' followers left Him to the men who hated Him.

CAIAPHAS QUESTIONS JESUS

Mark 14:53

⁵³ *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes (KJV).*

Violation Two

Jesus before Caiaphas was illegal because the Law stated, "*Be not a sole judge, for there is no sole judge but One.*" (Mishnah, in "*Pirke Aboth*" IV 8)

"An accused man must never be subjected to private or secret examination, let in his perplexity, he furnish damaging testimony against himself." (Salvado in, "*Institutions de Moise*" pp. 365-366). The high priest's private examination of Jesus was illegal even though the others.

Jesus trial before the Jewish authorities included a preliminary hearing before Annas (John 18:12-14, 19-24) the former high priest (high priest AD 6-15) then an arraignment before Caiaphas (high priest AD 18-37) and the Sanhedrin at night (Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65). Caiaphas was the first to recommend Jesus' death to "save the nation (John 11:49-50)." John alone records the private interrogation, testifying: "*The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples and of His doctrine* (John 18:12-24)." This interrogation, first by Annas the former high priest and then

Caiaphas was illegal because it took place at night and was by a sole judge even though *the chief priests and the elders and the scribes* were there with Caiaphas. After Annas' preliminary hearing Jesus was then taken to Caiaphas the current high priest's home.

Jesus' Six Trials	
Religious Trials	
Before Annas	John 18:12–14
Before Caiaphas	Matthew 26:57–68
Before the Sanhedrin	Matthew 27:1–2
Civil Trials	
Before Pilate	John 18:28–38
Before Herod	Luke 23:6–12
Before Pilate	John 18:39–19:6

AT THE HIGH PRIESTS PALACE

Mark 14:55-56

⁵⁵ *And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.* ⁵⁶ *For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together (KJV).*

Violation Three

The indictment against Jesus was illegal because the Law stated, "*The entire criminal procedure of the Mosaic Code rest upon four rules: certainty in the indictment; publicity in the discussion; full freedom granted to the accused; and assurance against all danger of errors of testimony*" (Salvador in, "*Institutions de Moise*" p.365) "*The Sanhedrin could not originate charges; it could only investigate those brought before it*" (Edersheim in, "*Life and times of Jesus the Messiah*" Vol. I. p.309)

"The only prosecutors were the witnesses in the crime. The witnesses constituted the charge. There was no formal indictment until these witnesses spoke in the public assembly. When they spoke, and the evidence of two agreed together, it formed the legal charge, libel, or indictment." (Mendelsohn in "*The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews,*" p.110)

The form of the indictment was illegal. Under Hebrew justice there was no grand jury. Leading witnesses presented charges. In addition to naming a specific crime, the indictment must allege the precise acts of the accused, which constitute the specific crime. Nearly every detail of Jesus' trial violates the rules for capital cases prescribed in the Mishnah. The Sanhedrin short-circuited procedures and violated the law, in order to expedite Jesus' execution. Josephus, in fact, records a similar trial in A.D. 62 when the high priest Ananus convened a rump (a meeting held after a larger meeting) session of the Sanhedrin in order to secure the death of James, brother of the Lord. ¹

¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200–203. Likewise D. Flusser, *Jesus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997), 146–47,

The Sanhedrin was “looking for” evidence against Jesus (v. 55); the Greek word “looking for” is *zēteîn* and it always implies negative intent. Here the intent to condemn Jesus. The prisoner’s record, however, provides no grounds for accusation (v. 55), and the Sanhedrin must resort to false testimony. The “many” false witnesses were coerced to testify to the determination of the Sanhedrin to dispatch Jesus. Jewish law demanded at least two corroborating witnesses in capital cases (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). They brought many witnesses but they are contradicted each other.

WITNESSES ARE FOUND

Mark 14:57-59

⁵⁷ And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, ⁵⁸ We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. ⁵⁹ But neither so did their witness agree together (KJV)

Finally, they found some witnesses to testify against Jesus with a lie regarding what Jesus had said about the Temple. They twisted what Jesus had said about His death and resurrection. If He had truly said anything about the material Jewish Temple the Romans would have charged Him with a capital crime. These witnesses could also not agree amongst themselves.

CAIAPHAS INTERVENES

Mark 14:60-62

⁶⁰ And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? ⁶¹ But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? ⁶² And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven (KJV).

Caiaphas was getting frustrated with the whole process which although highly illegal was not getting to any usable charge against Jesus. So, he they now tries to coerce Jesus to incriminate Himself. They had tried and failed on many occasions to trap Jesus but were unable to do so with their trick questions. Caiaphas demands that Jesus answer His accusers and explain the accusations made against Him, but Jesus *held his peace, and answered nothing*. Jesus simply would not respond to nonsense (Isaiah 53:7). Now the proceedings came to a halt. Caiaphas seemed to switch tactics looking for a chargeable offense. He point blank asked Jesus, “*Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?*”

Even though the authorities were violating the Law Jesus would not. He did not answer the first question but He will answer the second one. Jesus was put under oath (Matthew 26:63), which forced Jesus to answer under the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 5:1). Jesus would be forced to incriminate Himself by answering question two which was related to the Law. Jesus keeps the Law.

Violation Four

The condemnation sentence was pronounced against Jesus by the Sanhedrin and was founded upon His uncorroborated confession.

The Law stated, *"No one can bring an accusation against himself. Should a man make confession of guilt before a legally constituted tribunal, such confession is not to be said against him unless properly attested by two witnesses."* (Maimonides in "Sanhedrin" IV p 2)

"No attempt can be made to lead a man on to self-incrimination. Moreover, a voluntary confession on his part is not admitted in evidence, and therefore, not competent to convict him, unless a legal number of witnesses minutely corroborate his self-accusation." (Mendelsohn in "Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews" p.133).

Jesus was convicted and condemned to death on legally inadmissible evidence. It was at first sought to condemn Him to death on legally inadmissible evidence, on the charge of sedition, *"but their witness agreed not altogether"* (Mark 14:56). But, instead of releasing Jesus, the judges, in total disregard of the law, turned to the accused and asked, *"Answerest thou nothing? what is it these witness against thee? But He held His peace and said nothing"* (Mark 14:60). By remaining silent Jesus was invoking the right against self-incrimination. Caiaphas insisted that Jesus incriminate Himself. So, Jesus in accordance with the Law in Leviticus 5:1 responded to Caiaphas's question as to Jesus' deity. Jesus said, *"And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."* Jesus was simply telling them who He is affirming Psalm 110:1 as the Son of Man sitting at God's right hand, and coming on clouds refers to Daniel 7:13-14; Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 19:11.

CAIAPHAS HEARS ENOUGH

Mark 14:63-65

*⁶³ Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?
⁶⁴ Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. ⁶⁵ And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands (KJV).*

By tearing his clothes, Caiaphas showed that he regarded Jesus' admission as blasphemy. To him, Jesus' words dishonored God by claiming rights and powers belonging exclusively to God alone (Mark 2:7). His expression of horror and indignation was all symbolism, which was required of the high priest whenever he heard blasphemy. Since Jesus' self-incriminated Himself there was no need for more witnesses. The Mosaic Law prescribed death by stoning for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:15-16). Without further investigation the high priest called for a verdict from the Sanhedrin. Since there were no objections they all condemned Him (Mark 10:33) as worthy of death. With this admission and faked expression of indignation by Caiaphas some members began to hit Him after they blindfolded Him. They spit on Him, struck Him with the palms of their hands and challenged Him to prophesy since He claimed to be the Messiah.

RELIGIOUS LEADER'S CONDEMNATION

Mark 15:1

¹ And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate (KJV).

The Sanhedrin issued their verdict at dawn (Mark 15:1; Matthew 27:1; Luke 22:66-71). The entire group of seventy men plus the high priest issued their guilty verdict and the charge was blasphemy. Since they tried Him illegally at night they sought to provide some semblance of legality by having the decision affirmed during the daylight and get the Romans approval for an execution. They knew that they had to take Him to Pontius Pilate. From him they would petition the approval to have the Romans execute Jesus so they *carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate*. The Romans required approval for all capital crimes so as to maintain the Pax Romana. Pilate was woken up to the sounds of an angry mob outside his home.

A Roman governor could either affirm or rescind the Sanhedrin's death sentence (John 19:10). If the Jewish verdict was rescinded, a new trial before a Roman court was ordered and scheduled. In that trial the Sanhedrin would have to prove that the defendant had committed a capital crime under Roman law not Jewish Law. The Sanhedrin conviction of blasphemy (Mark 14:64) was not a punishable charge according to Roman law. Because of that the Sanhedrin substituted a charge of treason, using Jesus' acknowledgment that He was the Messiah into a traitorous political charge that He is "the King of the Jews" (Mark 15:2; Luke 23:2). They tried to convince the Romans that Jesus was a traitor who was stating that He was a "King" and therefore a potential insurrectionist and a threat to Rome and the Pax Romana.

JESUS BEFORE PONTIUS PILATE

Pontius Pilate was a Roman Governor in Samaria and Judea (West Bank today) from A.D. 26-36 and Jerusalem was located within Judea. His normal residence was in Caesarea on the Mediterranean Sea but he was in Jerusalem for the Passover. At that time there were thousands of Jewish pilgrims in Jerusalem. With the influx of worshippers there was a stronger chance of rioting than during other times of the year. Pilate stayed in a place called the Praetorium, which was his Jerusalem headquarters. He had no love of the Jews and the attitude was mutual. Consider the tension of this meeting as Jesus an innocent man is brought by Jews who hated Jesus as well as the Romans to the Roman governor who disliked the Jews for a decision to execute Jesus.

Mark 15:2-3

² And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. ³ And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing (KJV).

Now before Pilate with the new charge of traitor to Rome as the King of the Jews, *And Pilate asked him, "Art thou the King of the Jews"?* Pilate had complete and sole authority to render a decision. The trial would normally be held outdoors in public. It opened with a magistrate's indictment and then interrogation and testimony from the witnesses and the defendant as well. As soon as the magistrate heard all the evidence he would render the verdict and immediately follow with a sentence, which would be carried out quickly. There was no appeal. The Sanhedrin had issued a death sentence for blasphemy but changed it to treason for Pilate. Pilate did not take the Sanhedrin's sentence. He wanted to hear the testimonies himself. He asked Jesus directly if He was *the King of the Jews*. If this was true then this was a traitorous action that was underway against Caesar and had to be punished by death. Jesus answered in a rather cryptic way. Instead of saying yes, He implied it. However, His implication was that He is the Spiritual King of a realm unknown to Pilate and the Sanhedrin as well (John 18:33-38). Pilate did not immediately see any criminal activity in this silent Jewish Rabbi in front of him. He could see that the Sanhedrin had a weak case and there was hardly

any threat of this man inciting a rebellion against Rome. Now the *chief priests accused him of many things* to try and bolster their case against Him with Rome. Pilate knew the charges were weak and even false and he expected Jesus to say something in His own defense *but he answered nothing* as prophesied (Isaiah 53:7). Luke records their false charges.

Luke 23:2

² And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King (KJV).

Their charges were:

1. Perverting the nation
2. Forbidding others to give tribute (taxes) to Caesar
3. Making Himself out to be the King

Jesus had no reason to delay the execution given that it was the reason He came to earth to die for the sins of mankind. There was another short trial that only Luke records. Pilate found out that Jesus was a Galilean so he sent Him to Herod Antipas the tetrarch of Galilee who was also in Jerusalem for Passover. Herod had Jesus dressed as a false king and demanded that He perform some miracle. He only mocked Jesus and returned Him to Pilate.

Mark 15:4-5

⁴ And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. ⁵ But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled (KJV).

The religious leaders bring various charges against Jesus, which are not made clear here. Pilate quickly figures out that this accusation and trial is not about Jesus' guilt or innocence. It is about the *jealousy* and hatred of the priestly rulers, because Jesus is much more popular with the crowds than they are (v. 10). The charges themselves impress Pilate much less than Jesus' confident silence in the face of his accusers (v. 5). Pilate continued to be amazed at Jesus remaining silent with so much envy and hatred directed toward Him.

PILATE WANTS TO RELEASE JESUS

Mark 15:6-9

⁶ Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. ⁷ And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. ⁸ And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. ⁹ But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews (KJV)?

Each of the gospels tells how hard Pilate tried to avoid condemning Jesus. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod as a courtesy, which he appreciated, and they became close friends as a result of this (Luke 23:12). Coupled with the fact that Pilate's wife warned him not to harm Him because He is innocent Pilate was very uncomfortable about having Jesus executed. She had a dream, which frightened her. As a result, she sent a message to Pilate while he was in the Praetorium with Jesus and the angry crowd.

Matthew 27:19

¹⁹ When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him (KJV).

In order to try and please the Jews somewhat the Romans had a practice of releasing one prisoner at Passover. The Jews had come to expect this and thought of it as “their custom” (John 18:39). This was no more than a goodwill custom of the Roman governor of Judea in furtherance of the Pax Romana over a conquered and occupied nation. Instead of granting Jesus an acquittal, Pilate chose to grant the customary Passover amnesty, thinking the people would request the release of Jesus. Together with Jesus in the Pretorium was a criminal named Barabbas (Hebrew from Bar Abba, “son of the father”). He was a known freedom fighter and murderer. He had stirred up much opposition toward Rome and was known as an insurrectionist. He was awaiting the order of execution from Pilate. While he was a criminal to Rome many of the Jews regarded him as a hero trying to throw off the yoke of enslavement of Rome over the Jews.

The crowd that had assembled at his palace though was the group of Jewish religious leaders that were not favorable toward Jesus and wanted to be rid of Him. He exposed their chicanery and the spiritual enslavement they put the common Jews under with their rabbinic law. They ignored the Mosaic Law and didn’t know God who they professed to represent in Israel. They also did not recognize the Messiah He sent (John 5:39-47). The crowd being incited by the chief priests was chanting for Pilate to release to them one criminal. They had come to see Jesus executed. Pilate wanting to not execute Jesus said, “*Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?*” He did not expect or appreciate their response.

THE CHIEF PRIESTS ORCHESTRATE JESUS

Mark 15:10-11

¹⁰ For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. ¹¹ But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them (KJV).

Pilate was well aware of the envy the chief priests had toward Jesus. Envy a strong motivator is grief or anger caused by another’s success. He took this opportunity to show his contempt for them by offering to release the King of the Jews but they chose Barabbas instead. The powerful chief priests had incited the crowd to approach his judgment seat with their request to release Barabbas. In the trial before Pilate opposition to Jesus came largely from the Sanhedrin. The actual arrest and trial of Jesus, however, as this text explains, were the responsibility of the high priest. Mark is very specific and objective: the prime mover in Jesus’ trial and arrest is the high priest, who “stirred up” or incited the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas.

THE JEWS DEMAND JESUS’ CRUCIFIXION

Mark 15:12-14

¹² And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? ¹³ And they cried out again, Crucify him. ¹⁴ Then

Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him. (KJV).

Pilate was now in a quandary. He had the warning of his wife. He knew Jesus was innocent but did not understand why He chose not to defend Himself. In a sort of mocking to them he refers to Jesus as “*him whom ye call the King of the Jews.*” These verses show how Mark focused on the culpability of the religious leaders in Jesus’ execution. When their efforts to have Jesus killed appeared to be stopped by Pilate, the religious leaders persuaded the crowd to cry out loudly to crucify Him. This plot would never have worked with the huge crowds that loved and followed Jesus. It was only because He had been so popular that the religious leaders were prevented from moving against Him earlier. They had to conduct an illegal trial at night so that His supporters were unaware of what was transpiring (Mark 11:18; 12:12; 14:2). Their plot against Jesus was also aimed at placing the blame on the Romans. Pilate ruled as governor in an out of the way region, which according to Rome was of minor importance. They only provided him with a small army that put him at a disadvantage if the Jews actually rebelled. He had to do what ever he could to maintain the peace or incur the wrath of the emperor in Rome. Although he did not see any reason to kill Jesus he went along with them because they threatened to report him to Tiberius Caesar (John 19:12). If they did that and rioted his career would be severely limited or ended. Pilate did not need a riot at Passover with thousands of additional Jews in Jerusalem to add to his grief. In his frustration he asked them, “*what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.*” The irony of all of this is that Jesus will hang on a cross between two genuine insurrectionists and die as a substitute for one more, Barabbas. The only reason Jesus is there is because he is *not* one of them. Barabbas is one of them and this is the first person for which Jesus died as the substitutionary Lamb that takes away the sins of the world. Matthew adds the fact of Pilate washing his hands in symbolic gesture of having no responsibility over this execution (Matthew 27:24-25). In fact the Jewish religious leaders take full responsibility for His death and affirm to pass it on to successive generations; *then answered all the people, and said, “His blood be on us, and on our children.”* In fact when Pilate asked the crowd if he should crucify their king they said, “*We have no king but Caesar*” (John 19:15).

PILATE RELEASES BARABBAS AND SENTENCES JESUS

Mark 15:15

¹⁵ And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified (KJV).

Jesus’ last of six trials ends with Pilate wanting to appease the angry crowds more than administer justice. If Pilate wanted to release Jesus it was not going to happen without causing a riot. He knew they had no sustainable charge against Jesus but he was willing to satisfy them and crucify Jesus. So, he washed his hands of the matter but would remain guilt ridden over this. As a true magistrate he had no good reason to crucify Jesus other than political appeasement of the crowd in avoidance of a riot and angering Caesar. So he released the criminal Barabbas and had Jesus flogged. Pilate had Jesus flogged in hope that the people would take pity and be satisfied. The flogging did not move them at all; they still insisted He be crucified (John 19:1–7). Flogging was done as a measure to accelerate the prisoner’s death on the cross. It was done with a multi-stranded whip. Into the ends were fastened pieces of metal or sharp bones or pottery. Typically, several soldiers carried out the flogging and there was no limit on the length of the flogging. The person scheduled for execution seldom survived the flogging. In Jesus case He had to go to the wooden cross in fulfillment of a prophecy. Paul explains in Galatians.

Galatians 3:13

¹³ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree (KJV).

Paul is referencing the Mosaic Law in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 21:23

²³his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt surely bury him the same day; for he that is hanged is accursed of God; that thou defile not thy land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance (ASV, 1901)

APPENDIX of ALL POINTS of LAW

FIRST POINT

"The Jewish law prohibited any part of legal proceedings by night. (Dupin in, "Jesus Devant Caiphe et Pilate.")

Even *before* Jesus' trial began the law was broken because His arrest was illegal. The Jewish law prohibited any part of a legal proceeding in capital offenses to take place at night, and Jesus was arrested at night.

"A capital offense must be tried during the day and suspended at night" (Mishna in "Sanhedrin" Vol.1)

*"Criminal cases can be acted upon by the various courts **during the day time only.**" (Mendelsohn in "Criminal Jurisprudence of Ancient Hebrews" p. 112).*

SECOND POINT

Jesus before Caiaphas was illegal because the Law stated, *"Be not a sole judge, for there is no sole judge but One."* (Mishna, in "Pirke Aboth" IV 8)

"An accused man must never be subjected to private or secret examination, let in his perplexity, he furnish damaging testimony against himself." (Salvado in, "Institutions de Moise" pp. 365-366). The high priest's private examination of Jesus was illegal.

That Jesus was privately examined before His regular trial by the Sanhedrin is clear. Whether the examiner was Annas or Caiaphas is not certainly known. John alone records the private interrogation, testifying: *"The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples and of His doctrine."* This interrogation, by whom- ever, was illegal because it took place at night and was by a sole judge.

THIRD POINT

The indictment against Jesus was illegal because the Law stated, *"The entire criminal procedure of the Mosaic Code rest upon four rules: certainty in the indictment; publicity in the discussion; full freedom granted to the accused; and assurance against all danger of errors of testimony"* (Salvador in, "Institutions de Moise" p.365) *"The Sanhedrin could not originate charges; it could only investigate those brought before it"* (Edersheim in, "Life and times of Jesus the Messiah" Vol. I. p.309)

"The only prosecutors were the witnesses in the crime. The witnesses constituted the charge. There was no formal indictment until these witnesses spoke in the public assembly. When they spoke, and the evidence of two agreed together, it formed the legal charge, libel, or indictment." (Mendelsohn in "The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews," p.110)

The form of the indictment was illegal. Under Hebrew justice there was no grand jury. Leading witnesses presented charges. In addition to naming a specific crime, the indictment must allege the precise acts of the accused which constitute the specific crime. Was this rule observed in framing Jesus' indictment? Gospel records do not disclose the fact.

FOURTH POINT

The Law stated, "*The Sanhedrin was to set from the close of the morning sacrifice to the time of the evening sacrifice.*" (Talmud, Jesus, Sanhedrin - Vol. I, p. 19)

"*No session of the court could take place before the offering of the morning sacrifice.*" (M.M. Lemann in "*Jesus Before the Sanhedrin.*" p. 109)

"*The morning sacrifice is offered at the dawn of day. The Sanhedrin is not to assemble until the hour after that time.*" (Mishna, in "*Talmud, of the Perpetual Sacrifice.*" Chapter III)

The Sanhedrin Convened before the offering of the morning sacrifice, therefore illegal.

FIFTH POINT

The proceedings were conducted on the day preceding a Jewish Sabbath, also on the First Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Eve of the Passover, therefore it was illegal.

The Law stated, "*Court must not be held on the Sabbath, or any holy day.*" (Betza, chapter Vol. II).

"*They shall not judge on the eve of the Sabbath, nor on that of any festival*" (Mishna, Sanhedrin IV. 1.)

"*No court of justice in Israel was permitted to hold sessions on the Sabbath or any of the seven Biblical holidays. In cases of capital crime, no trial could be commenced on Friday or the day previous to any holiday, because it was not lawful either to adjourn such cases longer than over night, or to continue them on the Sabbath or holiday.*" (Rabbi Wise in "*Martyrdom of Jesus*" p.67)

The trial was illegal because it was held on a day forbidden by the law, that is a feast day and the day before the Sabbath.

SIXTH POINT

The trial of Jesus was illegal because it was concluded within one day. Just think of a

trial in a capital case, from beginning to end, lasting less than twenty-four hours, and taking place at an hour of the night and day contrary to law. And further, consider the fact that it was at an hour in the morning at which only the Sanhedrin rabble mob was found. Jesus had multitudes of friends among the common people who, if they had known of the trial, would have been present to protest and storm the court in His favor and defense. However, Jesus was not even permitted a lawyer to defend Him.

The Law stated, "*A criminal case resulting in the acquittal of the accused may terminate the same day on which it began. But if a sentence of death is to be pronounced, it cannot be conducted before the following day.*" (Mishna in "Sanhedrin" IV. 1.)

The trial of Jesus was illegal because it was begun and concluded in one day. Before the finding of guilty could be decreed "*a night had to intervene between the trial and the decree,*" during which the judges could sleep, fast, meditate and pray. Yet the Gospels record clearly discloses that Jesus was arrested, tried and executed within a single day.

SEVENTH POINT

The Condemnation of Jesus was illegal because the verdict of the Sanhedrin was unanimous.

The Law stated, "*A simultaneous and unanimous verdict of guilt rendered on the day of the trial has the effect of an acquittal.*" (Mendelsohn in "*Criminal Juris- prudence of the Ancient Hebrews*" p. 141).

"If none of the judges defend the culprit, i.e. all pronounce him guilty, having no defender in the court, the verdict guilty is invalid and the sentence of death could not be executed." (Rabbi Wise in "*Martyrdom of Jesus*" p. 74)

EIGHTH POINT

The condemnation sentence was pronounced against Jesus by the Sanhedrin and was founded upon His uncorroborated confession.

The Law stated, "*No one can bring an accusation against himself. Should a man make confession of guilt before a legally constituted tribunal, such confession is not to be said against him unless properly attested by two witnesses.*" (Maimonides in "Sanhedrin" IV p.2).

"No attempt can be made to lead a man on to self-incrimination. Moreover, a voluntary confession on his part is not admitted in evidence, and therefore, not competent to convict him, unless a legal number of witnesses minutely corroborate his self-accusation." (Mendelsohn in "*Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews*" p.133).

Jesus was convicted and condemned to death on legally inadmissible evidence. It was at first sought to condemn Him to death on legally inadmissible evidence, on the charge of sedition, "*but their witness agreed not altogether*" (Mark 14:56). But, instead of releasing Jesus, the judges, in total disregard of the law, turned to the accused and asked, "*Answereth thou nothing? what is it these witness against thee? But He held His peace and said nothing*" (Mark

14:60). By remaining silent Jesus was invoking the right against self-incrimination. Caiaphas insisted that Jesus incriminate Himself.

Thus, it is seen that it was not upon the testimony of two competent witnesses, agreeing in all essential details, as the law required, was Jesus condemned to death.

Jesus was accused of blasphemy, not sedition, as the latter charge had been dropped. As to the charge of blasphemy, it was the duty of the court to seek out the truth or falsity of the charge.

At the beginning of the trial before the Sanhedrin Jesus was charged with sedition which was soon abandoned. The trial proceeded on the charge of blasphemy. Then, before Pilate, blasphemy was dropped and a third charge was made: "*high treason*."

The Sanhedrin had little confidence that their so-called trial on blasphemy would be affirmed by one who administered the great and high developed system of Roman justice. To be certain that Jesus would be done away with, they substituted the charge of high treason against Caesar, the most serious crime known to the Roman law and one over which the Romans had exclusive jurisdiction.

A single verse in St. Luke contains the indictment: "*We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King*" (Luke 23:2).

The Jews had not intended to get involved in all this Roman law and thus lose jurisdiction over their prize prisoner. They had hoped to secure a summary endorsement of their own judgment without a new trial by the governor. When the prisoner was first brought before Pilate, Pilate asked: "*What accusation bring ye against this man?*" (John 18:29). The evasive answer was given, "*If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to thee*" (John 18:30). Pilate did not take the hint.

The substance of Pilate's reply to the Jews was this, "*I have asked for a specific charge against the man. You have given me an equivocal answer. I imply the crime is against your own laws. If so, you try Him. I do not wish to meddle*" (John 18:31).

The Jews, thus thwarted, formulated the new charge of treason. Pilate beckoned Jesus into the palace where the trial took place. Pilate asked, "*Art thou King of the Jews?*"

"*Jesus answered him, sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?*" (John 18:34).

Pilate did not clarify his question, so Jesus gave a true answer to both of its possible meanings.

He replied, "*My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but not is My kingdom not from hence.*" (John 18:36).

Pilate regarded Jesus as a harmless religious fanatic, from whom Caesar had nothing to fear. He went to the rabble and pronounced a verdict of "not guilty, *I find in Him no fault at all.*"

Suffice it to say that the record of the night trial discloses two distinct charges: (1) the charge of sedition - the threat to destroy the Temple and thus to seduce the people from their ancient allegiance, and (2) the charge of blasphemy preferred by Caiaphas. When the false witnesses filed to agree, their contradictory testimony was rejected and the charge of sedition was abandoned.

Pilate had tried and acquitted Jesus. This was a proper trial in conformity with the Roman law, however, instead of setting Him free, Pilate ordered His release to the Jews who crucified Him. This, in spite of one illegal trial and a second legal trial in which He was found innocent!

NINTH POINT

The sentence of condemnation was pronounced in "*a place*" forbidden by law.

The law states, "*After leaving the hall Gazith no sentence of death can be passed upon anyone soever*" (Talmud, Idolatry, Chapter 1, Vol.8).

"A sentence of death can be pronounced only so long as the Sanhedrin holds its sessions in the appointed place" (Maimonides in "*Sanhedrin*" XIV).

In the trial of capital cases, the Great Sanhedrin was required to meet in an appointed of the National Temple of Jerusalem, known as the Hall of Hewn Stones. Outside of this hall no capital trial could be conducted and no capital sentence could be pronounced in obedience to the Mosaic injunction found in Deuteronomy.

TENTH POINT

The Sanhedrin Members were legally disqualified to try Jesus because the law stated, "*There must not be on the judicial bench either a relation, or a particular friend, or an enemy of either the accused or the accuser*" (Mendelsohn in "*Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews*" p. 108).

"Nor under any circumstances was a man known to be at enmity with the accused person permitted to occupy a position among his judges" (Benny in "*Criminal Code of the Jesus*" p. 37).

That the members of the Sanhedrin were prejudiced against Jesus and that they sat at the trial with vindictiveness in their hearts is evident, because Jesus interfered with the money-making schemes of the Jewish syndicate in the Temple, as recorded in the Gospels.

The Sanhedrin was against Jesus because He publicly exposed their hypocrisy to the people and desired to abolish the illegal taxes which the Sanhedrin imposed upon the people. Was that not enough to prejudice that body in advance to the extent that they could not give Him a fair and impartial trial?

These judges who tried Jesus were not selected with the highest considerations of choice by men and, therefore, were not true ministers of justice and their decisions did not mete out substantial justice to all.

The trial of Jesus consists in the prejudice of the Sanhedrin toward the accused. The Hebrew law required absolute freedom from all interest in the result of the trial, and the entire absence of all prejudice against the accused. Yet Jesus was surrounded by hostile judges, already determined upon His death. Notwithstanding this vital disqualification, the trial of Jesus proceeded before this scant and hostile and unlawfully convened quorum of the Sanhedrin.

ELEVENTH POINT

The condemnation of Jesus was illegal because the merits of the defense were not considered. The law stated, "*The primary object of the Hebrew judicial system was to render the conviction of an innocent person impossible. All the ingenuity of the Jewish legislator was directed to the attainment of this end*" (Benny in "*Criminal Code of the Jews*" p. 56).

Jesus should have been allowed to prove the truth as His defense. The judges of the Sanhedrin are not to be condemned because they misunderstood His defense ***but because they denied Him all defense!***

At a fair trial in full daylight, it is believed that a host of witnesses friendly to Jesus could have been called before His judges, and their testimony would have established an exact fulfillment of ancient Messianic prophecy in His birth, life, arrest and trial.

The only possible verdict they could have legally rendered would have been, "***Not Guilty!***"