

THE ARREST AND TRIAL OF JESUS CHRIST

A. After Christ’s suffering in Gethsemane, Jesus was ready for His arrest & trial by the Jews & Romans.

1. The role of Judas:

- a. Jesus had dismissed Judas from the Upper Room; and Judas had lost no time in going to the Jewish leaders who had secured a band of soldiers armed with swords and staves to arrest Jesus (Matt. 26:47).
- b. Judas was determined that Jesus not escape. He had escaped before, but Judas did not understand that Jesus’ hour had come. Judas was concerned that they might take the wrong man [it was dark; one of the disciples might be arrested in the confusion] so he had a sign, Matt. 26:48-49.
- c. The kiss must have been particularly hurtful to Jesus. It was humiliating to be kissed by the traitor; Judas turned a sign of friendship into betrayal (Matt. 26:48-50; Mark 14:45; Luke 22:48).

2. Events in the Garden at the time of His arrest:

- a. First, Jesus’ arrest was unlawful: He had not been accused of a crime; He had not been indicted or charged. He was simply arrested by the Jewish authorities who hoped to find some reason later.
- b. Second, Jesus proved by His actions that He was completely in control and that He willingly handed Himself over: He could have escaped or called upon His Father for help or used His own power (Matt. 26:53; John 18:4-12).
- c. The last act He performed before they bound Him – and just imagine the rough treatment He endured – was to heal Malchus’ ear (Luke 22:50-51). The disciples were ready to fight for Jesus (Luke 22:49) but when they saw that He would not resist, they fled (Matt. 26:56). Jesus was more concerned about the welfare of His disciples (John 18:7-9).

B. The trial of Jesus had two phases: before the Jews and then before Pilate.

1. First, we ask, why was it necessary that Jesus be *tried*?

- a. Certainly, this had *not* been the desire of the Jews. They had wanted to assassinate Him without any fuss, but Jesus forced their hand. God had two purposes in it.
- b. First, the Jews [the false church] and the Romans [the world] must both be confronted with the question: What will you do with the Son of God? In the end, the only “crime” of which Christ was guilty was that He was the Son of God and neither Jew or Roman could accept that. *It was no crime: it was true.* If the Jews had wanted they could have examined Him on His doctrine and works but they wanted Him dead.
- c. Second, God’s purpose was to display Christ’s personal innocence. Neither Jew nor Gentile – prejudiced as they were – could find any evil in Him. Only as the Innocent One could He die for us.
- d. Third, God Himself pronounced His verdict upon Christ: He would go to His death having been tried and with the sentence of death officially pronounced. Guilty, guilty! Guilty because of *our* sins!

2. [Ecclesiastical trial] A travesty of justice which served to display the wickedness of the leaders

- a. Acc. to Jewish Law the trial of Jesus was full of illegalities. 1/ The timing of His trial: trials could not take place in the evening or at night; not before the morning sacrifice; not on the day before the Sabbath or on the day before the Feast Days. In addition, if a guilty verdict was likely, the verdict could not be given on the same day so that all could have at least a night to “sleep on it,” to consider the evidence. *Christ’s trial was hurried. He was found guilty before dawn within hours of His arrest.* 2/ The presumption of guilt: Jewish trials began with the assumption of innocence. Before any evidence of guilt could be mentioned, the evidence of innocence should be discussed. Jesus’ innocence was never even entertained for a moment. No one spoke in His defense. And the accused was made to incriminate himself. In addition, guilt in a capital offence could only be proved by two witnesses who were the ones who would accuse the prisoner. He should have the right to face the accused in open court. 3/ The place of the trial: The trial must take place in the inner court of the temple, not in the high priest’s home.
- b. Further indignities: Jesus was interrogated by Annas, father-in-law to Caiaphas.. Various attempts were made to incriminate Jesus: they asked Him about His doctrine and His disciples (John 18:20-21). He answered that His doctrine was not secret, and He shielded His disciples. A servant of the high priest slapped Jesus (18:22-23). False witnesses were brought in but they could not agree (Mark 14:56, 59).

- c. Caiaphas put Jesus under oath and Christ confessed (Matt. 26:62-64; Mark 14:60-62). This was the basis of His condemnation, but such a religious offence would not be a capital crime under Roman Law.
- d. Part of the suffering of Christ at this point was Peter's denial (Luke 22:61).
- e. As soon as Christ made the confession they pronounced Him worthy of death. At that point, they treated Him cruelly (Matt. 26:67-68; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63-65; Isa. 50:6). Beating, spitting, mockery, fun abusing the prisoner. Then they committed Him to a dungeon and waited for dawn to go to Pilate (6.a.m.).

C. Trial before Pilate.

1. **[1st appearance] The Jews had secured sentence of death but couldn't inflict death penalty.**
 - a. Early in the morning, probably 6. a.m. Jesus, tired, hungry, thirsty, bound was brought to Pilate.
 - b. The Jews had to find some crime which would interest the Romans. They accused Him of three – He seduced the people (was the leader of a popular rebellion), He forbids paying tribute (a barefaced lie), He says He is a king (true, but not in the sense to be a threat to Roman rule). (Mark 14:3; Luke 23:2).
 - c. Pilate was only interested in the third charge and was mindful to let Jesus go at that point (John 18:33-38).
 - d. Having discovered that Jesus was a Galilean, He sent Him to Herod. Herod questioned Him, hoped to see a miracle, and when Jesus remained silent, Herod mocked Him (Luke 23:6-12).
2. **Second appearance before Pilate [probably around 8 a.m.].**
 - a. The Jewish leaders return still demanding that Jesus be punished but still unable to prove any crime.
 - b. Pilate offers the people a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. He could not have given the people a greater contrast: Jesus of Nazareth and Barabbas, a thief, a murderer, an insurrectionist (Matt. 27:16; Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19; John 18:40).
 - c. To the horror and surprise of Pilate, the people demanded Barabbas (Matt. 27:20-27).
3. **Pilate still wanted to release Jesus so he decided to scourge Jesus and let Him go.**
 - a. This was a travesty of justice. To declare that someone is innocent and then to whip Him! (Luke 23:22).
 - b. The Roman soldiers who scourged Jesus made fun of Him: they stripped Him naked, they scourged Him (a punishment so horrible that many died from it); and they put on His gore-covered back a scarlet robe and they made Him a crown of thorns. Then they beat Him and mocked Him. The "whole band" [lit. a cohort] could be as many as 600 soldiers (John 19:1-3).
 - c. After He had been scourged, He stood before the people battered, covered in His own gore and Pilate cried out, "Behold the man!" (John 19:5). The crowd still demanded His crucifixion. Pilate tried to dissuade them but the Jews warned Pilate, 1) He makes Himself the Son of God [John 19:7-8]; 2) If you let Him go, you are a traitor to Cesar [John 19:12]. Pilate pronounced sentence (Matt. 27:24-26).

D. The Way to the cross

1. **Jesus was in a terrible state physically by now [And the burden of our sins was particularly heavy].**
 - a. Likely it had been over 8 hours since His arrest. No mercies had been shown to Him: no sleep, no food.
 - b. He had been beaten by the Jews and scourged by the Romans. His back would have been ripped open and was now a congealed gory mess. From his back his scarlet robe was torn, and a huge piece of wood was placed on His raw back and tied around His shoulders (John 19:17)
 - c. Then He was forced to walk through the streets of Jerusalem while passersby reviled Him as a criminal. Two other criminals (robbers) were led to execution with Him. It was not uncommon for such people to be spat upon by the crowds, *but our calling is not to pity Him, but to weep for ourselves.* Luke 23:27-32.
 - d. Finally, Jesus, exhausted, and in great pain was unable to carry His cross. A passerby called Simon of Cyrene, was forced to carry it (Luke 23:26).
2. **When they got to the execution site outside the city the soldiers did their grisly work.**
 - a. The three men were laid on their crosses, and great nails were hammered into their wrists and ankles. The pain must have been unbearable. And yet Christ did not scream. His recorded words are in Luke 23:34.
 - b. The superscription was attached to Christ's cross – a mockery of Christ's Kingship [John 19:19].
 - c. Then the crosses were hoisted up and that must have wrenched the bones and joints horribly.
 - d. The soldiers offered a drink to the prisoners to dull the pain (Matt. 27:34) [not out of mercy but to make them more manageable]. *Christ refused because He wanted to remain conscious through everything.*
 - e. Crucifixion was an agonizingly painful death – slow death by asphyxiation. But the physical pain was not the worst of it. That was the pain the two thieves felt. Christ's death was unique. But more next week.