

The day following Gethsemane marked the last day of the earthly life of Jesus. The events of this day are recorded in all four of the gospel accounts. It was one of the darkest days in man's history in that our Lord suffered like no man had ever done before or since. The past two days merged together with no rest for Jesus. His arrest took place around midnight in the garden of Gethsemane and was followed almost immediately by six stages of a so-called trial that lasted till six or seven o'clock in the morning. With the surrender of Pilate, Jesus was in the hands of His enemies and was placed on the cross about nine o'clock. By mid-afternoon, He was dead.

ARREST: It all started with the arrest. The Jews put together a plan that was illegal, unfair, and unwarranted. No man was ever more innocent, and no man has ever stood before six more illegal and unfair trials than Jesus.

Jesus had to be arrested before He could be brought to trial. The Jews needed the cooperation of Judas to show them where Jesus would be. They had tried to grab Him on other occasions, but He always eluded their arrest. Judas agreed, for 30 pieces of silver, to betray Christ. Thirty pieces of silver was the cost of a common slave, a very cheap price. But Judas really sold himself, and not Christ.

Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane with the eleven disciples when soldiers and others approached with "lanterns, torches, and weapons." They were led by Judas who betrayed the Son of man with a kiss.

John 18:2-3 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. (3) Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons."

Judas knew where to go to find Jesus, and it was late at night where there would be no threat from the crowd of people. From the garden, Jesus could look across the valley and see the torches and lanterns as the soldiers made their way down the path from Jerusalem, across the valley, and up to the Mount of Olives. Try to imagine how He must have felt?

Mat 26:47-49 - “And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. (48) Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. (49) And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. Luke 12:48 Jesus simply says, “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?”

Observe that because it was night, this was an illegal arrest. The crowds at Passover would not be in the garden and Jesus would be easy to detect if He ran. Apparently, the Jews expected to have a difficult time in some way when they tried to capture Jesus. That’s probably why the band of men came with lanterns, torches, and weapons (John 18:3). As to the number of soldiers, a “band” consisted of a group anywhere from 600 to 1000 men. In John 18:12, the word for “captain” in the Greek is “*chiliarchos*”, which means “*leader of a thousand soldiers.*” So, there could have been up to 1,000 soldiers who came for Jesus that night. They came prepared for a fight.

John 18:4-9 - “Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? (5) They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. (6) As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. (7) Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. (8) Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: (9) That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.”

As they approached, Jesus did not run. Instead, He went forth to meet them. (John 18:4) They didn't expect that. While the Jews knew the identity of Jesus, likely the Roman soldiers did not. As the crowd approached, Jesus met them and asked, “*Whom seek ye?*” They replied, “Jesus of Nazareth”. He said, “*I am he.*” It seems the strength, courage and conquering appearance of Jesus overwhelmed them, and some fell backward to the ground. This alone was astonishing.

As He is giving himself up, he is filled with compassion for his disciples (v8) by asking the Romans to let them go their way. I would likely be concerned with me, but not so with Jesus. It is at this point that Peter cuts off the right ear of a servant to the high priest (verse 10), and Jesus has compassion on this victim as well, because He touched his ear and healed him. Peter, having pledged to die with Jesus, took his sword and was willing to take on the entire army in defending Jesus. During the process, he cut off the right ear of Malcus. Jesus rebuked Peter and put the ear back in place. Jesus then went with His captors.

Matt 26:51 “And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. (52) Then said Jesus unto him, “Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. (53) Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” A legion was 6000, so 12 legions would be 72,000 angels if taken literally. 1000 soldiers would be no match for some 72,000 heavenly hosts in hand-to-hand combat. John 18:10 tells us that the servant's name was Malchus and Luke 22:51 says that Jesus touched him his ear and he was healed.

(54) - “But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? (55) In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. (56) But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.” Likely the OT prophecy to which Jesus referred was *Zechariah 13:7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.*

(Luke 22:53) When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

Jim Bishop, in his book The Day Christ Died wrote, *“The proper manner, taught by the academy of soldiering in Rome, was to take the accused by the right wrist, twist his arm behind him so that his knuckles touched between his shoulder blades, and at the same time, jam the heel of the boot down on the right instep. And tied the other arm with a loose noose around the neck”*

At this point, the disciples deserted Jesus (Mark 14:50). He is all alone. From this point on, He was not free. He was the property of the State, and the State planned to devour Him. He was not the Son of God to them, but he was a rebel-rouser. He was a fake. And this is the first experience where we see that Jesus had to deal with pain. From now on, all the blows Jesus took were taken with His hands tied behind His back. The trial starts at John 18:13. But before we look at these passages, let's briefly look at the historical background.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Jews lived in Palestine, which was ruled by the Roman Empire and the Romans were ruled by a powerful and ruthless Caesar. Tiberius was the Caesar at this particular time. Tiberius ruled with an Iron fist. He was a sadistic and anti-Jew, as was Pilate. It had been passed down from Rome that Palestine would never carry a prisoner to a capital punishment. The Jews could not take a life. If they could have, they would have stoned Jesus, because that was the method of killing. But since they were under Roman authority, they must use the Roman method of capital punishment.

So they could try a man and bring him only so far, namely to their council called the Sanhedrin; there was a greater Sanhedrin made up of seventy to seventy-three and there was the lesser Sanhedrin which had twenty-three men, but the lesser could not pass judgment on capital crimes; it had to be before the full body. Once they come to an accusation they must carry that to the Roman authority, who happened to be Pilate. And only when he gives the “go-ahead” can death occur. And that's why Jesus was crucified for treason rather than stoned for blasphemy.

The Jews did not try him for treason; they found him guilty of blasphemy. But they twisted the accusation when they came before the Romans and they turned it into treason because, in Rome, death is instantaneous for those guilty of treason.

There was not one trial for Jesus, there were six! Half of them were Jewish and half of them were Roman. Under the Jews **First there was Annas**. Then there was **Caiaphas**, with a body of men making up the Sanhedrin. And then third, there was this official band called the **Sanhedrin**. The whole question of treason is not even verbalized.

Then it goes to trial number **four, Pilate** the governor. This is where they accused him of treason because they were before a Roman Civil Court. And ultimately, after trial number five, which was really a clowning experience in front of **Herod Antipas** (all he wanted to see was some tricks by Jesus), he came finally to **Pilate again**, his sixth and final trial. Because of pressure from his wife, and because of Rome, Pilate gave the death sentence to Jesus. Pilate was never convinced of his guilt by the way, and the only half-way fair trial that Jesus got was before Pilate. The trials of Jesus were never intended to be fair or impartial. They were legal conspiracies engineered by his enemies to secure the condemnation of Jesus.

LAWS GOVERNING CRIMINAL TRIALS

Now, here are some of the illegalities of the Jewish trials.

1. If a man was arrested for a capital crime, he could never be arrested at night. It had to be in broad daylight. Jesus' arrest took place between 1 and 2 o'clock at night.
2. If a man was arrested for a capital crime, no one cooperating in the arrest could be in any way connected to the one who is accused. No arrest for a capital crime could be made based upon information given by a follower or colleague of the accused. Because they felt if the accused was guilty so were his followers. But the entire plot revolved around Judas, one of the followers. This law was blatantly and openly ignored.

3. No Jewish trial could ever be held at night. The law stated that it must be held in the daytime. Listen to the code, which is taken from the Talmud: *“The members of the court may not alertly and intelligently hear the testimony against the accused during the hours of darkness.”* But, if you check the record, both before Annas and Caiaphas, these trials were held in darkness.
4. The members of the Jewish court, after hearing the testimony of true witnesses (none of which were ever brought before Jesus) in a capital crime, could not immediately act and judge. They were to go home and remain alone and separate from one another for two days (at the least, one full day), thinking about the testimonies they had heard. During that time, here's what they were to do. Here's the language of the code: *“Eat like food, drink like wines, sleep well. And once again return and hear the testimony of the accused. Then, and only then, shall you render a vote.”* They didn't do that. Their Jewish court never left the presence of Caiaphas!
5. In fact, even the method of voting was specified! They never took an “all in favor say I, all opposed say no” kind of vote. Their vote was supposed to be taken from the youngest to the oldest so that the youngest wouldn't be intimidated or influenced by the older votes. This never happened.
6. No trial could be held before only one judge, and never without a defense attorney. All of that was overlooked, openly, willfully ignored and disobeyed. Even though they were people of the book, they didn't follow their own rules. In the history of justice, I don't know of a more illegal series of trials. Nothing was done according to their law.

Next week we will look into the Jewish trials of Jesus. But already we have seen a glimpse of injustice with Jesus, but not so with us. Jesus one day will be our judge and he has promised righteous judgment and on that day you will stand before him to give an account of the deeds you have done, both good and bad. Are you ready for that day?

Invitation