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Jesus was tried six times; three by the Jews and three by the Romans. Today we are going to look at the Jewish trials. Their plot to kill Jesus started long before the event. We see after the raising of Lazarus (John 11:46 ff) the chief priest, Pharisees and council coming together saying (48) *If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.* Their motives were political. Then Caiaphas the high priest had the solution. (50) *it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.*

TRIAL 1 BEFORE ANNAS (ABOUT 1:00 A.M.) The Jews first took him to Annas. *John 18:12-13 Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, (13) And led him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.* The first man before whom Jesus stood was Annas. Why Annas? He wasn't even the High Priest! He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the High Priest. What's the father-in-law doing seeing an accused man at 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning? We don't know. Annas had been appointed high priest of the Jews in 6 A.D and held that position until 15 A.D., but while out of office he was the virtual head of the priestly party in Jerusalem. He was the boss of the Mafia.

Annas was in charge of two special things at Passover. **First** he was in charge of the changing of money and the discount rate was atrocious. **Secondly**, he was in charge of selling sacrificial animals at an incredible inflated cost. If you were to bring your own animal, you had to have it pass the Annas' men which were like the mafia. And when you brought your animal to them, they would take a careful look at the animal and would surely find some marks that would disqualify the use of your animal. But they would sell you their animal at three or four times more than you would pay back home. And all the profit wound up in Annas' pocket. He was a crook.

The throne was passed to his son-in-law who was nothing more than a pawn in the hand of his father-in-law. This is why there are passages like Luke 3:2 and Acts 4:6 that refer to both Annas and Caiaphas as the high priests. Thinking like people do today, you

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would expect that Annas never forgot the time Jesus drove them out of the temple and he lost all that money. Now it was payback time.

Jesus, with his hands tied is now standing in front of Annas. Everything about this is illegal. He had no business standing before someone who was not on the council. And there were no witnesses. So Jesus stood there silently. No Jew had to make his own statement. Statements could be made against the accused, and the council would decide on a verdict, but the accused could remain silent.

There are two things probed. Annas wanted to know about the man, and then he wanted to know about His teaching (John 18:19). Jesus doesn't answer his first question, but as to His teaching, He answers in a most unusual way. *John 18:20-21- "Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. (21) Why askest thou me? ASK THEM WHICH HEARD ME, [ask my witnesses where were none] what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said."*

This made Annas angry and Jesus was struck by an officer after he said this (verse 22). Jewish law never allowed brutality in the court either, except for Jesus. Under the rules of trial procedure, Jesus knew that it was against the law to solicit the testimony of anyone, except witnesses and collaborators. Besides, under the law, no prisoner had to undergo preliminary examination. So, Jesus told him to ask the witnesses what He taught. After He was struck, (v23) *"Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?"*

He bore this without retaliation. As far as we know, His hands were still bound behind his back as He took the punches of grown men. When Annas was finished with him, he had no answer. He was silenced. He himself was judged, not Christ. And so they carted him off to Caiaphas (verse John 18:24).

TRIAL 2. CAIAPHAS AND THE SANHEDRIN (ABOUT 3:00 TO 4:00 A.M.)

Mark 14:53 – "And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled

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all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes". Caiaphas was serving high priest (18–36 A.D) got together a group of men in the early morning. Remember, it's illegal because it's dark; it's illegal because of the preliminary hearing; it's illegal because they're in the wrong place, (Caiaphas' house and not in the court chamber). ***Luke 22:54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house.***

While standing before this court, the Jews secured false witnesses to testify against Jesus, but none could agree. ***Deut.17:6 - "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death."*** But they could find none. Now they tried ***Matt 26:59-62 - "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, SOUGHT FALSE WITNESS AGAINST JESUS, TO PUT HIM TO DEATH; (60) BUT FOUND NONE: YEA, THOUGH MANY FALSE WITNESSES came, yet found they none."***

Where were they to find such witnesses at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning? Finally ***"At the last came two false witnesses, (61) And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. (62) And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?"***

Finally, two agreed that Jesus said that He could destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days (John 2:19, 21), but Mark tells that even their testimony did not make a strong case. These witnesses were contradicting each other. But Caiaphas had to get this case down to Pilate! He had to get Jesus killed! And Caiaphas knew that he had no creditable witnesses! So, he tried another illegal route. He talked to the accused (Mark 14:60), but Jesus held His peace and said nothing. ***Mark 14:60 "And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?"***

Then Caiaphas played his trump card. He asked Him if he is "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed" (verse 61), and Jesus answers him! ***I AM: AND YE SHALL SEE THE SON OF MAN SITTING ON THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, AND COMING IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.*** You might be wondering why He answers now and not before.

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In Matthew's gospel, just before Caiaphas asked this question, Caiaphas said, ***"I adjure thee by the living God, (Matthew 26:63) and when a devout Jew heard that, he was obliged to answer. (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."***

In essence, Jesus claims to be God and gave a prophesy that Caiaphas couldn't handle. Caiaphas grabbed the collar of his robe and gave it a yank (v63) because the Talmud (writings that formed Jewish oral religious law) required that when a moderator heard blasphemous words, he was to publicly disagree by tearing his garments. However, Old Testament Leviticus (Lev 10:6) taught that no official was to tear his garments, and so that's where the Talmud (oral law) conflicts with scripture (written law), but they were driven by the Talmud. This acknowledgment signed his death warrant. It was considered blasphemy, and to the Jews, worthy of death. It was during this time that some abused Him. ***"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."*** (Mark 14:65)

By the way, it's not allowed for the moderator to make the decision, the council had to make it. He didn't say let's take a vote in the order prescribed by law. No. Instead he said, ***"What think ye?" (verse 64)***, and they all condemned him. Do you see the mob mentality?

PETER'S DENIALS: *Mark 14:67-72 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. (68) But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. This girl wouldn't leave well enough alone. She knew from his Galilean accent that he was a disciple. Peter made sure they didn't associate him with Jesus by his speech and began to curse and swear (71) ... saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.*

Luke 22: And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. (61) AND THE LORD TURNED, AND LOOKED UPON PETER. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. (62) And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”

THIRD TRIAL: BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN (SECOND TIME) By the time the first two trials were over, Jesus was probably bleeding and bruised, but as yet, there was no official verdict cast upon his life. All that transpired occurred during the hours of darkness, and nothing would be recognized as official by the Romans until He had his audience before the Sanhedrin.

Luke 22 records what transpired about 6 o'clock in the morning. Luke 22:66 says it was day. Mark 15:1 tells us it was early in the morning. Understand that the supreme court of the Jews was the Sanhedrin. There was no such thing as going to a higher court, because there was no higher court. Therefore, when the Sanhedrin met, and passed final judgment, that's the way it was. *Luke 22:66-71 - “And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, (67) Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: (68) And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. (69) Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.*

(70) Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.(71) And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth

Again, let's notice some illegalities centered on this session. Even though no Jewish trial could ever be held at night, Jesus had been interrogated twice during the night. Since the law stated that a court hearing must be held in the daytime to make it legal, they met during the day. Notice, too, that from verse 70, it is implied that they all cast their vote against Jesus and it was immediate – illegal on two accounts. There had to be at least one

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abstaining vote that would vote in favor of the defendant. Secondly, in a capital crime, they could not immediately act with a judgment. They were to go home and remain alone and separate for a day or two to think about the case and the testimonies. This was also to allow time for new evidence. But this third trial was the shortest of all the trials. Jesus, in their mind, was guilty.

The court voted unanimously to take him to Pilate. The charge was blasphemy, but that would not stand up in a Roman court. Therefore, between the time they dismissed and gained an audience with the governor, Pilate, they made plans to switch the accusation to treason and claimed that He was guilty of attempting to overthrow the government.

Matthew 27:1-2 - "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: (2) And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor."

END OF JUDAS Matt 27:3-10 – "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, (4) Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, WHAT IS THAT TO US? SEE THOU TO THAT. (5) And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, AND WENT AND HANGED HIMSELF.

Injustice was done to Jesus by his own people, but we as Christians will receive fair and righteous judgment as we stand before this same Jesus on day in judgment. Are you ready for that day?

Invitation