

The Illegal Trial of Jesus (Part 1)
Mark 14:53-65
August 24, 2014

Introduction

Before we get into the illegal trial of Jesus, we need to contrast it to what the Jews normally do when administering justice.

Deuteronomy 16:18-20 *Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly. 19 Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. 20 Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.*

The Jews, from the time of Moses to Jesus' time, take God's command about justice very seriously. They develop a sophisticated system with strict observances of His laws. The Jews pride themselves of having a just society.

In towns with 120 men as heads of families, there is a synagogue. Within the synagogue, there are 23 men selected as elders and judges. They sit together and decide on issues of civil and criminal matters. By having 23 men means that there will always be a majority. If there are towns smaller than 120 men as heads of families, then the villages can have 3, 5, or 7 men selected as elders and judges. Among the elders, there will be one who is the leader, and he is often called in the NT "the chief ruler."

In Jerusalem, there are 71 men who rule the council, which is called the Sanhedrin. This Sanhedrin consists of 24 chief priests, 24 elders, and 23 scribes. Leading the Sanhedrin is the high priest.

Interestingly, according to the Jewish laws, the judges are to give any accused three guaranteed rights.

- Public trial: everyone can see what is going on. Private or secret trials are not allowed.
- The accused has the right to self-defense by calling witnesses and making statements.
- No one could be convicted unless charged or proven guilty by two or more witnesses.

The third point is the most important because the judges are to protect the accused from false witnesses. In order to validate the witnesses, they must provide accurate information concerning the time, date, circumstances of that day, and the testimonies of the two witnesses must agree.

Deuteronomy 19:16-19 *If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse a man of a crime, 17 the two men involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the LORD before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time. 18 The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against his brother, 19 then do to him as he intended to do to his brother. You must purge the evil from among you.*

If someone bears false witness against another person, then whatever punishment to the crime that person is accused of will be dealt to the false witness. The whole point of justice is to protect the accused of false witnesses.

Here are the principles that the Jews follow:

- The trial must be public. There are auditors that make sure that justice is acted upon correctly.
- Witnesses must present detailed information concerning crime and the accused. Hearsay and generalities are not allowed.
- Auditors and judges are allowed to speak on the behalf of the accused if thought to be innocent.
 - However, they were not to speak if they thought the accused guilty.

- Reason: they do not want to cause an emotional response.
- If the judges determine that the accused is guilty by majority vote, then they are to fast three days (from any kind of food and drinks) and concentrate on the case before pronouncing the sentence.
 - For this reason, the trial cannot be held on feast days, Sabbaths, or a day before feast days or Sabbaths.
- On third day of reflection, judges can convene and revote.
 - If the judge condemns, then he can change his vote to acquit.
 - If the judge acquits the first time, then he is not allowed to change his vote.
- If on third day, the accused is declared guilty, then the accused is led to the place of execution.
 - There is a flag man outside the judgment hall.
 - Another flagman follows the execution party and looks out for the flag
 - If there is new evidence that is brought before the judges, then the execution is halted— flags are raised.
 - If nothing, then the execution goes on as planned.

The Jewish judicial proceedings are very merciful to the accused. However, when the Sanhedrin brings Jesus for the trial, they violate every single laws of justice. This trial is the most unjust trial in human history. This court is supposed to save a life, yet they seek to condemn and destroy the only truly innocent person who ever lived. There is perversion of justice by both the Jews and the Gentiles.

Jesus faces two trials: Jewish trial and Roman trial. Each trial has three phases. The Jewish trial starts with Annas. Then it moves to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. The final phase is at dawn when the Sanhedrin tries to legitimize their evil deeds. After this, they hand Jesus over to the Romans under Pilate's watch. Pilate then hands Jesus over to Herod because He is from Galilee. Then Herod brings Him back to Pilate. All these trials lead to the execution of Jesus Christ. None of the judges find any fault in Him, yet they kill Him anyway.

Mark 14:53-59

53 They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together.

- They took Jesus to the high priest
 - Second phase of the trial
 - Mark does not mention the first phase
 - Whose house?

***Matthew 26:57** Those who had arrested Jesus took Him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled.*

- Caiaphas—high priest and son-in-law of Annas
- Before they start the trial, they take Him to Annas first

***John 18:12-14** Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound Him **13** and brought Him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. **14** Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people.*

- Annas
 - Who is this man?
 - High priest some years before Caiaphas
 - Roman governor forced him to step down
 - Jews regard high priest as office for life
 - His five sons and his son-in-law served as high priest
 - He is the power behind the temple corruption (mafia boss)

- Extremely wealthy and powerful
- Hated Jesus for His disruption of the Temple trade
- Why Annas first?
 - To come up with charges against Jesus
 - To give Caiaphas enough time to gather the Sanhedrin and the false witnesses
- To bring up charges

John 18:19 *Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about His disciples and His teaching.*

- There are no formal charges against Jesus
 - When Jesus was arrested, there were no documents stating the charges

Acts 9:1-2 *Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest **2** and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.*

- The high priest bribes Judas to turn in Jesus
- What Annas is doing is asking Jesus questions, hoping that He will implicate Himself
- This is illegal
 - Annas is not part of the Sanhedrin
 - Jesus should not be questioned in secret
- Jesus know that this was illegal

John 18:20-21 *"I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. **21** Why question Me? Ask those who heard Me. Surely they know what I said."*

- He does not have to answer anything Annas asks
- Burden of proof is on Annas and he cannot provide any witnesses against Christ
- Annas embarrassed

John 18:22-24 *When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck Him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded. **23** "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike Me?" **24** Then Annas sent Him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest.*

- If I'm guilty, prove it. If I'm innocent, then why are you hitting Me?

54 *Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.*

- Peter follows behind

Matthew 26:58 *But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.*

- He wanted to see what was happening to Jesus
- Courtyard

55 *The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put Him to death, but they did not find any.*

- Caiaphas gathers the whole Sanhedrin

- Except for Joseph of Arimathea (and maybe Nicodemus)

Luke 23:50-51 *Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, 51 who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God.*

- They are looking for evidence to fit the punishment—His death
 - Jesus' verdict has already been long decided

John 11:49-50 *Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! 50 You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."*

- This is against what God expects of justice
 - They were not to invent crimes
 - They were not to be lawyers to bring up charges
 - They could only investigate the charges brought to them
 - They are holding this trial in the middle of the night
 - During the Passover Feast before the Sabbath
 - They have bribed

56 *Many testified falsely against Him, but their statements did not agree. 57* *Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against Him: 58 "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this manmade temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.' " 59* *Yet even then their testimony did not agree.*

Note: They are supposed to save people from false witnesses. Here they are trying to get false witnesses to lie so they can kill someone. They are filled with pure hatred.

- Impossibility of implicating Jesus
 - Jesus is perfect and commits no crime or sin
 - In order to come up with charges against Jesus, they have to lie
- No false statements agreed

Mark 14:57-58 *Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against Him: 58 "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this manmade temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.' "*

Matthew 26:61 *and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.' "*

- The two witnesses testimonies do not agree with each other
- Jesus never said this

John 2:19 *Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."*

- The false witnesses are not useful for the Sanhedrin, so they do not use them for the trial