

JESUS' BETRAYAL AND PERJURED TRIAL

BIBLE TEXT : Matthew 26:47-68; 27:1, 2, 11-26

LESSON 63 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Matthew 26:47-68

⁴⁷ 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.

⁵⁰ And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

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?

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.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Arrest of Jesus in the Hour of Darkness

1 A great multitude with swords and staves is sent to take Jesus, Matthew 26:47

2 Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss, Matthew 26:48-50

3 Peter draws his sword and cuts off the ear of Malchus, Matthew 26: 51-56;

John 18:10 ¹⁰ Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

II The Midnight and Morning Trials before the Jewish Council

1 The first trial of Jesus before Caiaphas was held at night, Matthew 26:57-68

2 The second trial of Jesus before Caiaphas was held at daybreak, Matthew 27:1;

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.

Luke 22:66-71 ⁶⁶ 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.

III The Three Trials before Roman Magistrates

1 "I find no fault in this man" is Pilate's first verdict, Matthew 27:1, 2, 11-14;

Luke 23:1-5 ¹ And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.

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

³ And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest *it*.

⁴ Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.

⁵ And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.

2 Herod finds Jesus has done nothing worthy of death, Luke 23:6-11, 15

⁵⁷ And they that had laid hold on Jesus led *him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

⁵⁸ But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

⁵⁹ 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. 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?

⁶³ But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

⁶⁴ Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

⁶⁵ Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

⁶⁶ What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.

⁶⁷ Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote *him* with the palms of their hands,

⁶⁸ Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?

Matthew 27:1-2

Luke 23:6-11 ⁶ When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean.

⁷ And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.

⁸ And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long *season*, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

⁹ Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

¹⁰ And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.

¹¹ And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked *him*, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

Luke 23:15 ¹⁵ No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

3 When Jesus was brought before Pilate the second time, he sought to release Him, Matthew 27:15-23;

Luke 23:13-20 ¹³ And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

¹⁴ Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined *him* before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:

¹⁵ No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

¹⁶ I will therefore chastise him, and release *him*.

¹⁷ (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)

¹⁸ And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this *man*, and release unto us Barabbas:

¹⁹ (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)

²⁰ Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.

John 19:12 ¹² And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

4 The clamor of the multitude prevails, Matthew 27:24-26

NOTES:

The Plan

Two days before the feast of the Passover, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest, to plan a method of killing Jesus without arousing the multitudes. It was soon after this that Judas bargained with the chief priests and agreed to betray Christ for thirty pieces of silver just as Zechariah had prophesied: "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver" (Zechariah 11:12). From that time forward Judas awaited his opportunity. The night of the Passover, Jesus was alone with the twelve. This was Judas' opportunity. Christ had told him that he was the one who would betray his Lord, but that did not stop him. At the head of an armed crowd which the chief priests had

¹ 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.

Matthew 27:11-26

¹¹ And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.

¹² And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

¹³ Then said Pilate unto him, Hearst thou not how many things they witness against thee?

¹⁴ And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

¹⁵ Now at *that* feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.

¹⁶ And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.

¹⁷ Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

¹⁸ For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.

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.

²⁰ But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

²¹ The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

furnished him, Judas said, "Hail, Master," and kissed Jesus.

The First Trial

Although it was yet night the scribes and elders were assembled to determine how Jesus might be put to death. These men, no doubt, constituted a quorum of the council, or Sanhedrin, which was the high court of the Jews. It was unlawful for the council to meet at night, but here they were, sitting in judgment of the Man against Whom they had conspired. The fact that they were prejudiced against Christ was sufficient to disqualify them from acting as judges to try Him. Nearly everything the council did to try Jesus was contrary to the traditions they were supposed to uphold.

False witnesses were sought whereby they might bring accusation against Jesus before the court, but it was difficult to find two who agreed. "At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days" (Matthew 26: 60, 61). "But neither so did their witness agree together" (Mark 14:59). Inasmuch as these two did not entirely agree, their testimony was of no value according to the Law. "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" (Deuteronomy 17:6).

Jesus heard these witnesses bring false accusations against Him, but He never uttered a word in His own defense. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

The rules of the Sanhedrin prohibited any member from acting as accuser. But it was with the finger of accusation that their leader, the high priest, said, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matthew 26:63) Being thus put under oath Christ broke His silence and replied, "Thou hast said." Jesus' answer given in Mark was, "I am." It was illegal for any man to be incriminated by his own testimony. By forcing Jesus under oath to answer this question they were compelling Him to testify, that they might incriminate Him.

Jesus was unanimously voted guilty of blasphemy and judged worthy of death upon His own admission that He was the Christ, the Son of God. This could not be called blasphemy unless proof were made that He was not the Messiah. No attempt was made to prove His statement untrue.

We understand that according to the Jewish law, at least one of the judges must defend the accused; this judge was honor bound to cast a vote of not guilty. A unanimous vote of guilty in capital cases meant that the verdict was invalid because of the lack of defense. Thus the first trial of Jesus was invalid, because (first) a unanimous vote of guilty was cast by the court; (secondly) no two witnesses agreed against Him; (thirdly) the charge of blasphemy could not stand, because it was by His own testimony that He was the Son of God, and no proof was obtained that denied His Messiah-ship.

The Second Trial

It was a matter of law that in capital cases a sentence of death could be given only after two trials. These two trials had to be separated by an interval of a full day. A pretext of legality was maintained by waiting until daybreak for the second trial. No witnesses were examined, and the court again violated the law by requiring Jesus to testify against Himself. None of the judges defended Him. The unanimous verdict of guilty which was reached was invalid because of lack of defense. Instead of being acquitted, Jesus was condemned to death because He was judged guilty of blasphemy

Had the Sanhedrin the authority at this time to carry out the execution of the sentence, Jesus would no doubt have been

²² Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? *They* all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

²³ And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

²⁴ When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye *to it*.

²⁵ Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children.

²⁶ Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *him* to be crucified.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Name some of the ways in which the trials of *Jesus* were illegal.
- 2 Who cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest?
- 3 What Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in this lesson?
- 4 Name the different officials before whom Jesus was brought.
- 5 What part of the country was under the jurisdiction of Pilate?
- 6 There are four Herods mentioned in the New Testament. What else is recorded of this Herod? Where was his jurisdiction?
- 7 Of what did the Jewish Council declare Jesus guilty?
- 8 What were the accusations against Jesus before Pilate?
- 9 Did Pilate find Jesus guilty?
- 10 Why did Pilate permit Jesus to be crucified?

stoned immediately. The Roman government left the Jewish courts free to regulate their own civil and religious affairs, but offenses involving life or death had to be tried before the Roman magistrate. The Jewish court had arrived at a verdict and pronounced a sentence which it had no legal right to pronounce nor to execute. The extent of the authority of the Sanhedrin in this case was to make an accusation before the Roman magistrate.

In Custody

While in custody of the Sanhedrin, Jesus should have been treated in a civil manner; but, instead, He was shamefully treated — spit upon and buffeted. *This* was not only a violation of a duty imposed upon the court by law, but was also a degradation of the dignity of the highest court of the Jewish nation. Isaiah prophesied of this treatment: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isaiah 50:6). We often refer to the Cross as the example of Christ's suffering for us, but many were the sufferings He went through before He reached the cross. "But 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" (Isaiah 53:5).

Before Pilate

The Sanhedrin, having arrived at a verdict of guilty and a sentence of death by reason of blasphemy, bound Jesus and took Him before Pilate, the Roman magistrate. The full measure of the mockery of the trial by the Sanhedrin is easily seen from the charges made against Jesus by Pilate. Their verdict of His being guilty of blasphemy is entirely forgotten. Jesus is charged with treason against the Roman government. This charge would gain the ear of Pilate, while the charges of blasphemy would not, because blasphemy was not a violation of Roman law. "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" (Luke 23: 2). What a flagrant falsehood this is in the face of the words of Jesus, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" (Matthew 22:21). Pilate rendered his first acquittal with the words, "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4).

Before Herod

When it was told Pilate that Jesus was from Galilee, which was under the jurisdiction of Herod, Pilate sent Jesus to him. Before Herod "the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him" (Luke 23:10); but Herod found no fault in Jesus. Although Jesus was declared innocent, "Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate" (Luke 23:11). This was Christ's second acquittal before a Roman court.

Before Pilate the Second Time

"And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. I will therefore chastise him, and release him" (Luke 23:13-16). With these words Pilate rendered his second verdict of "not guilty."

Had Pilate been a man of high principle he would have stood by his convictions and released Jesus. Instead, the clamor of the multitude prevailed. "And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required" (Luke 23:24). In so doing, Pilate broke that splendid legal maxim of the Roman law which says: "The idle clamour of the populace is not to be regarded when they call for a guilty man to be acquitted, or an innocent one to be condemned."

But far worse than violating a maxim of the Jewish law and the Roman law, Pilate violated the laws of Heaven in denying justice to

One of Whom he said, "I find in him no fault at all" (John 18:38), and by handing Him over to His enemies to be crucified, fearing the wrath of man more than the wrath of God. Thus the Scriptures are fulfilled which declare: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed" (Psalm 2:2).