

1. **Introduction:** Immediately after Jesus' late-night arrest, He was subjected to a series of trials. Putting together the information in the gospels, there were two general categories of trials – those by the religious authorities and those by the civil authorities with 3 stages or trials in each category.
 - The religious trials: (1.) The preliminary hearing before Annas, (2.) trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, and (3.) a second trial before the Sanhedrin after daybreak.
 - The civil trials: (1.) Trial before Pilate, (2.) trial before Herod, and (3.) a second or resumed trial before Pilate.
 - The religious rulers had decided before-hand that Jesus must die (*it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish*, John 11:50).
 - Jesus had outraged the religious leaders by denouncing them in public.
 - They derived a substantial portion of their income from the commercial activities in the Temple courtyard (selling animals and money changing).
 - Jesus called these activities ***“a den of robbers”*** (Mark 11:17).
 - In their minds, the rulers had plenty of evidence against Jesus, but legally they needed two independent witnesses to make charges that agreed in detail. The trial before Caiaphas struggled with that issue.
2. **Mark 14:55:** ***“the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none.”***
 - The trial was a legal farce. The religious rulers had devised a plot to include a trial with the predetermined outcome of a death sentence.
 - They are determined to see that plan to fruition.
 - After they drew forth many accusations, there still was no charge on which two witnesses agreed. Then there came a promising accusation that was made by several witnesses.
 - It was the claim to have heard Jesus saying, ***“I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands,”*** but, even on this accusation, no two witnesses agreed.
 - The words on destroying the Temple are a misquote of what Jesus said.
3. **John 2:18-21:** **So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?”** ¹⁹ **Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”** ²⁰ **The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?”** ²¹ **But he was speaking about the temple of his body.**
 - Indeed, after His death, He was raised up on the third day just as He said.
 - Frustrated at their inability to find not two witnesses whose testimony agreed, the high priest himself took over the questioning.
4. **Mark 14:60-64a:** ***And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?”*** ⁶¹ ***But he remained***

silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” ⁶² *And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”* ⁶³ *And the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further witnesses do we need?”* ⁶⁴ *You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?”*

- Caiaphas’ first question to Jesus was open-ended. What are these men testifying against you? Jesus didn’t answer. Then Caiaphas asked the key question. Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?
- Jesus answered, **“I am.”** Jesus added that He would be seen seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.
- That was all Caiaphas needed. Jesus had made an obviously blasphemous statement that was heard by multiple witnesses.
- **“And the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further witnesses do we need?”** ⁶⁴ **You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?”**
- The Sanhedrin had the charge they desired. Caiaphas asks for the decision of the gathered Sanhedrin. At least one person, Joseph of Arimathea was missing (Luke 23:50-51).
- Perhaps there were other missing members.

5. **Mark 14:64b-65:** *And they all condemned him as deserving death.* ⁶⁵ *And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophecy!” And the guards received him with blows.*

- The group at the trial began to treat Jesus with scorn, physically and verbally abusing Him. He was taken into custody by the guards with blows.
- The cruelty of the guards was especially vicious when they struck the blind-folded Jesus in the face with their fists and shouted “Prophecy” meaning as Matthew and Luke explain “tell us who hit you.”
- Though the Sanhedrin verdict was unanimous, it was not a legal sentence.
- Declaring a person guilty and sentencing him are two different matters.
- A verdict and formal sentencing were usually separated by a day. In this case the Sanhedrin feared waiting that long. They would meet again early in the morning for the purpose of sentencing.
- Then since they plan a death sentence, that sentence will have to be approved by Roman authority, Pilate, the governor.
- Through the arrest, preliminary hearing, trial and mistreatment, Jesus remained amazingly calm. His answer to Caiaphas’ second question is majestic and eloquent.
- **“I am (truly the Son of the Blessed), and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”**
- Caiaphas and the members of the Sanhedrin are anxious, worried about possible repercussions from what they are doing, but Jesus is calm and at peace. It is Jesus who is the real Victor in this drama not His persecutors.

- Jesus imparts calm rest to all who put their trust in Him.
6. **Matthew 11:28-30:** *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*
 7. **Mark 14:66-71:** *“And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, ⁶⁷ and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.” ⁶⁸ But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.” And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. ⁶⁹ And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” ⁷⁰ But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” ⁷¹ But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.” ⁷² And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.”*
 - From Gethsemane, Peter had followed the arrested Jesus to the home of Annas and then to that of Caiaphas. As the trial before Caiaphas ended, Peter was warming himself at a charcoal fire in the courtyard.
 - A servant girl recognized Peter as a disciple. He denied it saying he didn’t know Jesus personally. He moved closer to the gate, and a rooster crowed.
 - The girl saw him again and identified him to bystanders as a disciple. Peter denied it but his accent betrayed him. One of the bystanders said, surely you are one of them for you are also a Galilean.
 - Peter said may he be cursed if he was lying, but he certainly did not know the man in question. About that time, the rooster crowed again.
 - Peter remembered with anguish Jesus’ prediction that Peter would deny Him 3 times before the rooster crowed twice. He broke down and wept.
 8. **Mark 15:1:** *“And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate.”*
 - As soon as it was morning, the entire Sanhedrin met again for the purpose of sentencing Jesus. In this third trial the agreed upon sentence was quickly decided, and they bound Jesus and sent Him under guard to Pilate.
 9. **Mark 15:2-5:** *“And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” ³ And the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ And Pilate again asked him, “Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.” ⁵ But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.”*
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- If Jesus had answered Pilate’s first question with “yes,” that would make Jesus an insurrectionist, justifying His death and ending the questioning.
- Jesus’ answer, *“You have said so,”* simply turned the question back to Pilate. To further questions, Jesus made no answer. Pilate was amazed.

12. **Mark 15:6-11:** *Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked.⁷ And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas.⁸ And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them.⁹ And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?”¹⁰ For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead.*

- The Procurators typically had released one prisoner during the Passover festival as a goodwill gesture. The man released was usually one accused of a relatively minor offense.
- Pilate expected the crowd to ask for Jesus to be freed, but the chief priests stirred up the crowd and persuaded them to ask for Barabbas.
- Barabbas was awaiting crucifixion. His sentence was for insurrectionist or terrorist activity. His name means “son of a father” and seems to be an assumed name something like John Doe.

13. **Mark 15:12-14:** *“And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?”¹³ And they cried out again, “Crucify him.”¹⁴ And Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.”¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.*

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- Perhaps the assumed name was to protect his family from fallout that was expected from his lawless lifestyle.

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- If Pilate had hoped to convince the crowd that Jesus should be released, his plan backfired.
- Now, Pilate was faced with either risk a riot by going ahead and releasing Jesus, or release Barabbas and deliver Jesus to be crucified.
- He chose to satisfy the crowd and sent Jesus to be scourged and crucified.
- Scourging was brutal torture that frequently ended in death. As a precursor to crucifixion, scourging was intended to do enough damage to hasten death on the cross. Sometimes, it was called “the halfway death.”
- Jesus was taken to the Roman Fortress of Antonia which was the northeast corner of the Temple complex. Stripped naked (or almost so), Jesus was beaten with a whip that did drastic physical damage quickly.
- The soldiers taunted and humiliated Him. When He could bear no more without likely dying, they prepared Him for crucifixion.