

The Trials of Christ

Matthew 27:24

Today on "It's a Good Life," we continue our study in the life of Christ, and this would be lesson number 11. Today, we're going to look at the trials of Christ.

Now, following His arrest, the sinless Son of God was tried as a common criminal and sentenced to death. If you've read any Scriptures in the New Testament and the Old Testament that talk about this, you'll know that it was prophesied of that He would go to the cross.

Now, during the night and early the next morning, a total of six trials were conducted. This would happen after He was in the garden of Gethsemane after Judas betrayed Him with a kiss, and we need to understand that all of this took place in one night... the arrest and the trials of Jesus.

During the night and the next morning, a total of six trials were conducted. We often think of one trial, but there were actually six trials that Jesus went through, three by the Jews and three by the Romans.

Now, as we consider each of these horrendous trials, it's going to become quite clear who was really innocent and who was really guilty. Well, let's look now as the trials begin.

The Scripture tells us that immediately after His arrest, Jesus was led first to Annas. In John 18:13, it says, *And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.*

Jesus was brought before Annas for a preliminary examination. And then we see in that same verse in John 18:3 that Annas had evidently been high priest until a short time

before, and Luke chapter 3, verses 1-2, talk about this. And he still wielded much influence, essentially serving in a co-regency position with his son-in-law Caiaphas. Annas was perhaps the most powerful and influential man in Jerusalem. He served as the high priest from 7 A.D. until 15 A.D. And even after he was deposed, removed from office, in 15 A.D. he still retained the title. You can read about this in Luke chapter 3 and verse 2, John 18:19, 22, and Acts 4:6, for he is called the high priest even though he was not the actual high priest.

And so great was his influence over the priestly party that five of his sons, as well as his son-in-law Caiaphas, John 18:13, and his grandson Matthias each served as the high priest. This actually comes from Josephus, the Jewish historian.

Well, notice a few things with me if you would now. Annas asked Jesus two things. First, he asked about His disciples. Second, he asked about His doctrine, or His teaching. John 18:19 says, *The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.*

Now, concerning His disciples, the high priest was insinuating that Jesus was gathering around Himself a band of followers with the possible intention of political insurrection against Rome. And about His doctrine, the high priest wanted Jesus to say something that would make Him appear as one who was seeking to overthrow Roman rule. Do you see the pattern? How that Jesus was being presented as one who was going against the Romans. At this point, there was nothing said about going against the Jews' belief, their religion as to what they believed and what they were teaching, these religious leaders of the day.

Well, the Lord's response is found in John 18:20-21. Jesus answered him, *²¹I speak 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.* *²¹Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.*

Jesus was telling him that He never made anything a secret, that He spoke openly, that He was not trying to do anything covertly, but He was trying to let people know who He was, why He had come into this world. And we know that by reading the Scriptures. The Bible says that He came into the world to seek and to save those who were lost.

But let's look at something now... the question of legality. The trial before Annas was entirely illegal. First, it was held at night, contrary to Jewish law. Then, there was no indictment, a formal written statement charging a person with an offense. It was not prepared. There were no witnesses heard, and there was no counsel or defense attorney provided for the defendant. As we read in other words, everything they did was wrong, unfair, unjust, perverted, and contrary to proper legal procedure.

Now, they seemingly broke every law in the book. They sought by any means possible, even illegal means, to condemn Jesus, but they are the ones who should have been condemned for their travesty of justice. Well, that's the first trial. There are five more trials that take place.

At the second trial, Jesus was before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. This was an informal trial before dawn, and as we read in John 18:24, after his visit with Annas, Jesus was next taken to Caiaphas, John 18:24. And all the

council, the Sanhedrin, were gathered together for this perverse nighttime occasion.

Two witnesses against Christ are discredited, according to Mark chapter 14, verse 59. And we go on and we understand that Christ was asked if He was the Christ, the Son of God. Matthew 26:63 says, *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.*

And Jesus answered and said in essence, "What you have said is so," Matthew 26:64. Christ could not deny who He was. At this time, He spoke and He said, "You said it, and that's the truth. I am who I said I am."

And we read on in Matthew 26:65, *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.*

Now, as soon as Jesus had made His great claim, the high priest gave the verdict... guilty of blasphemy. Well, the council then pronounced the sentence. He is worthy of death, according to Matthew 26:66. That's the second trial.

Now, we look at the third trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. This was a formal trial at dawn. The council or Sanhedrin gathered together for one more meeting, according to Mark 15:1 and Luke 22:66. The Jewish leaders knew that their night trial was illegal, so as soon as it was day, they quickly condemned Jesus once again as they had done earlier. Luke 22:66-71 talks about this.

The Jewish leaders' decision was to put Christ to death, according to Matthew 27:1. Now, all they needed was the permission and the help of the Roman authorities to put Jesus to

death. This, of course, led to Christ's fourth trial. Matthew 27:1 says, *When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.*

In the fourth trial, Jesus came before Pilate for the first time. The Jews now after the third trial bind Jesus and lead Him to Pilate, the Roman governor, Matthew 27:2. Pilate first asked for the accusation or the charge, John 18:29. And then the Jews somehow had to make Christ appear as an enemy of Rome. Remember, as He was first being questioned, it was brought up by Annas that it was presented as something against Rome and not against the Jewish people themselves, and now Pilate wanted to know the charge.

What was Christ guilty of, according to the Jews? First, for hurting the nation. Second, forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King. Notice here in Luke 23:2: *And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar ...* that's untrue, of course... *saying that he himself is Christ a King.*

Well, the first charge was not specific at all. The second charge was obviously untrue. It was only the third charge which would have been of concern to Pilate, because anyone seeking to be a king would be a threat to Roman rule.

Well, Pilate wanted to pass the buck, and according to John 18:38, he found Him not guilty because of insufficient evidence. And then his plan failed, of course, and his second plan, the Jews could not be satisfied until Jesus was nailed to a roman cross, Luke 23:5-6.

But notice here, the Jews happen to mention one word: Galilee, to Pilate which led to the next trial, according to Luke 23:5. *And they*

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

Now, the fifth trial, Jesus came before Herod. Herod the tetrarch happened to be in Jerusalem at that time, according to Luke 23:7. Herod was glad to see Jesus, according to Luke 23:8, and note... this is the same Herod who had put John the Baptist to death. And the only thing that Herod gained from this interview was a new friend. He didn't gain anything by meeting Christ physically, but he gained a new friend, according to Luke 23:12... Pilate. They had been at odds against each other, but now they are brought together.

Now we see the sixth trial, Jesus before Pilate the second time. Pilate had a third plan. Pilate hoped to persuade the people that Jesus should be chastened and released, according to Luke 23:13-16. Any form of chastisement was wrong, but Pilate wanted to punish the Innocent to appease the people. The Jews wanted to crucify the Innocent and wanted to just crucify Christ and release the guilty murderer Barabbas. And Pilate's fourth plan, the next strategy, was to severely whip Jesus hoping that the Jews might have pity upon Him, according to John 19:1, 4.

Well, note what the Roman soldiers did to Jesus. They robed him with a scarlet purple robe. They crowned Him with a crown of thorns. They sceptered Him. In other words, they hit him on the head with a scepter. They adored Him in cruel mockery. They spit upon Him. They slapped Him hard in the face with the palms of their hands. They hit Him, and I'm sure there's other things that happened as well. All of Pilate's efforts to release Jesus failed, according to John 19, verses 8-16.

Finally, in his weakness, all Pilate could do was wash his hands, Matthew 27:24, and deliver Christ to be crucified.

I can only say hallelujah, what a Savior. He came and gave His life for me. He gave His life for you. As a human being, He died for you. Have you trusted Him? Ask Him into your heart today. He'll save you. If you are saved, you need to be living for Him. Hallelujah, what a Savior.

Father, I pray for this message now as it goes forth that You would send it with Your power because of Your Word, not because of me, but because of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

It's been good being with you today. Let me remind you to look at our Website, www.LRWM.org. And you can also write to me, Lewis Woodard, 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, FL 34731.

Until the next time, may the Lord bless you richly is my prayer.