

## LESSON SEVEN

# THE TRIAL

Scriptural References: Matthew 26:57 - 27:25; Mark 14:53 - 15:19; Luke 22:66 - 23:24; John 18:19 - 19:16.

### A. **THE ECCLESIASTICAL TRIAL:**

After the arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane, the members of the Jewish council (Sanhedrin) were hastily assembled to pass the sentence that they had already decided upon.

The soldiers hurried Jesus through the hushed streets of the sleeping city to the palace of the High Priest. The High Priest at this time was Joseph Caiaphas. He was as cunning as he was unprincipled, bigoted and cruel. He was the son-in-law of Annas.

Annas had served as high priest from 6 to 15 AD. Through astute politics he had succeeded in securing from the Romans the succession of this office to his five sons and now his son-in-law Caiaphas. Annas owned the famous Bazaars of Annas, which ran a monopoly of the sale of animals for the sacrifices and the stalls of the moneychangers. He hated Jesus from the day of the first cleansing of the temple and consistently sought ways and means to entrap Jesus in some word or work. It was before this archenemy of His that Jesus was taken first for a preliminary hearing. From a hearing before Annas, He was taken before Caiaphas and from there to the Sanhedrin.

The charges brought against our Lord were threefold:

1. Heresy: This was a charge of teaching doctrine contrary to the law. Annas implied this in His examination (John 18:19-24).
2. Sacrilege: He was accused of making the statement that He would destroy the temple that was made with hands and build another made without hands. This was a perversion of His words recorded in John 2:19-21.
3. Blasphemy: On oath Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. It was this admission that gave the opportunity they were looking for. He was instantly condemned to death.

### B. **THE DEATH SENTENCE:**

In the examination and trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin there was no mercy and no justice. At first there seemed to be no prosecuting witnesses. Finally they secured two witnesses to testify that Jesus had said, "I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands."

This was not enough to condemn Jesus, so in desperation Caiaphas began to question Jesus. *"I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God?"* This was a strange question from the High Priest to a bound, defenseless criminal.

In the days when the people wanted to claim Him as Messiah and King, Jesus had kept this fact in the background. Now, with death facing Him and His life depending upon His answer, He did not hesitate. The solemn answer was, *"I AM; and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."* This answer sealed the fate of

our Lord. Caiaphas tore his linen robes, and cried, "*Blasphemy! What further need have we of witnesses?*" The verdict, guilty of death, was quickly pronounced.

#### **E. THE CIVIL TRIAL:**

The power of inflicting the death penalty had been taken from the Jews; the rulers therefore appeared before Pilate, the Roman governor, to secure the execution of their sentence. It was possibly seven or eight o'clock in the morning when Jesus was led up the marble stairs of Herod's palace.

Pilate hated the Jews and was fiercely cruel. When Jesus stood before Pilate there could not be any more extreme opposites. Pilate lived in luxury, selfishness, sin and arrogance. He takes a cushioned seat and leans back at ease. The Prisoner stands, His wrists manacled. In semicircle around Him are the fiery Sanhedrists.

Pilate began to cross-question the Prisoner and finds Him innocent. His wife sent word concerning a dream she had and warned him.

The religious leaders had shrewdly changed the charge into a political one. They claimed that the Lord had rebelled against Rome by claiming to be a king and by forbidding the people to pay tribute. They failed to convince Pilate who sought to set Him free.

#### **D. TAKEN BEFORE HEROD:**

Pilate hoped that some means might be found to save Jesus and had Him sent to Herod. Herod Antipas was a man of great debauchery and apparently our Lord had no respect for him for He refused to answer even a syllable to Herod's questions. Herod was very happy to see Jesus. Undoubtedly his conscience had troubled him ever since he had John the Baptist beheaded. He hoped to see some miracle that Jesus would do, but Jesus maintained a dignified silence.

When Herod could get nothing out of Jesus, he had Him arrayed in a bright colored robe in mockery and sent Him back to Pilate with a letter of flattery. This healed an old feud between the two men.

#### **E. THE FINAL TRIAL:**

Jesus was dragged through the thronged and narrow streets, amid the jeering, raging multitudes for the sixth and final trial, which was the most agonizing phase of the terrible inquisition.

Pilate was quite determined to find some means of setting Jesus free. He had tried by sending Him to Herod. Now he attempted to take advantage of the custom of releasing a prisoner during a feast. He finally suggested the compromise of scourging Jesus and then releasing Him.

However, the people demanded the death penalty. They finally broke down Pilate's resistance by threatening to report him to the emperor and ruin him politically.

Pilate tried to wash away his guilt by washing his hands and saying, "*I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it.*" However, Pilate could not escape the responsibility of his decision. Later he paid the price by soon being banished to Gaul and there dying in suicide. To satisfy the mob, Pilate released Barabbas, a robber, murderer, and leader of insurrection and delivered Jesus to be crucified.

LESSON SEVEN

SELF HELP TEST

A. Jesus suffered six trials in all. Name each one.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

B. What were the three charges brought against Jesus before the Sanhedrin?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

C. What was the significance of our Lord's reply to the question of Annas?

D. Write a short paragraph regarding Herod Antipas.