

THE SAVIOUR JUDGED! (Mk. 14:53-65)

Mk. 14:53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. 54 And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire. 55 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. 56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. 57 And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, 58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. 59 But neither so did their witness agree together. 60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. 63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? 64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. 65 And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

Imagine living in a country controlled by a strict and religious autocratic regime ... It would determine what you would do in the street, what you would do in the home, what you would do in the workplace, and everywhere else ... Such religious domination is not, of course, an exaggeration for it is an approach pursued in many Middle Eastern countries today. ... In 63 BC, the Roman general Pompey conquered the land of Israel, - it became a Roman tributary, - and in line with Roman policy, they granted every nation they controlled the liberty to worship their own gods, which meant the Jews were free to continue to worship the God of their fathers. It also meant the Jewish leaders were allowed the freedom to exercise *their* jurisdiction, as long as it did not come into conflict with the Roman decrees. Jesus described the position of the Jewish leaders like this, [Mt. 23:2 The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat](#). ... They exercised the ancient Law of Moses, and the expected the people were to be compliant.

Through the years, these Jewish lawmakers added *to* the Law of Moses, and this resulted in many traditions being propagated which practically became equal to Scripture. Indeed, if you had asked the average Jew if a certain tradition came from the Scriptures or from the traditions of their religious leaders, many of them would not have been able to tell you! That is because tradition was basically on a par with the Scriptures, and tradition had *clouded* the Scriptures ... This resulted in none daring to question the authority of the Pharisees and the scribes because, [The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat](#).

This ancient description had its roots in Dt. 16, [18 Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. 19 Thou shalt not wrest \[natah ... pervert, stretch, bend\] judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.](#)

20 That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. This was orderly, and the pattern upon which their legal system was to be formed.

On this basis, - i.e. Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, - throughout the country of Israel, the men would form a *Sanhedrin* (συνέδριον, ‘assembling together’, ‘gathering together’). Depending on the size of the town/city, the Sanhedrin could be composed of twenty-three men ... and for larger cities, the maximum allowed was seventy-one. ... The prestigious council in Jerusalem was the largest and the most authoritative. It was known as the Grand or Great Sanhedrin, and consisted of seventy-one men. One of them was the ruler of the Sanhedrin, the high priest who was known as the ‘nasi’ (the ‘prince’), his deputy who was known as “the father of the court”, and the remaining sixty-nine consisted of twenty-three chief priests, twenty-three scribes and twenty-three Pharisees.

They met in one of the illustrious chambers within the Temple, - the Hall of the Hewn Stones. It was built into the north wall of the temple, with half inside the sanctuary and half outside. ... The Great Sanhedrin met there every day during sunlight, except for the feast days and the Sabbaths. ... They were a powerful body of men responsible for the political governance of Jerusalem. ... When they constituted a law, it was absolute and binding, with no exceptions. ... And all trials had to be public, with a prosecution and a defence, and no accusation could be upheld against anyone without two or three witnesses, **Dt. 19:15** One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established ... And it continues, **16** If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; **17** Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; **18** And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; **19** Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you [*by penalty of death*]. ... And when the sentence of death was announced, the execution had to happen within twenty-four hours, by stoning. At the time of Jesus, any other kind of death was outside the remit of a Jewish court to declare. And the person condemned to die also came under a curse. According to tradition, the witnesses whose testimony determined guilt, had to cast the first stone (cf. **Jn. 8:7** He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.)

Further laws stipulated no criminal, - under any circumstances was to be tried at night, during the hours of darkness. Neither could they be tried on a Sabbath, or during a feast day (such as the Passover). This meant Jesus had to be tried and convicted before six o'clock in the morning, - *before* the feast Day of Passover properly began. Also, if the judges returned a unanimous verdict, the criminal must be acquitted ... he must walk free because the Jews said a unanimous verdict lacked mercy. ... Indeed, right up to the execution of the criminal, and the proclamation of the verdict, a reversal could be possible at the last moment if proofs of innocence were produced.

Now neither mercy nor clemency was remotely considered by those who tried Jesus ... The Jews belonging to the Great Sanhedrin consistently broke their own rules when dealing with the Saviour. They orchestrated the evidence by employing false accusers, with bribes. Jesus was afforded no defence. They tried Him at night, on a feast day, and they were all in agreement against Him. He should have been acquitted ... but it was an illegal court from start to finish. It was unconstitutional, unlawful, and illegal ... It should not have happened! The lawmen were breaking the law!

And then Jesus would be taken from the Jewish 'kangaroo court' to the Gentile courts of King Herod, the local tetrarch/ruler, and to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor for the region. Altogether, Jesus appeared in six courts ... First of all, He stood before Annas, the Emeritus High Priest, who had been high priest twenty years earlier, but continued to be the 'driving force' behind the Sanhedrin; each of his five sons succeeded him as high priests, and *they* were succeeded by Caiaphas, his son-in-law. ... Jesus' second court appearance was in front of Caiaphas ... and His third was the public appearance before the members of the Sanhedrin. From there He was taken before Pilate, then 'King' Herod (Antipas), and back to Pilate for the death sentence. ... Six court appearances altogether, completed in a mad rush, - from about after one o'clock in the morning until sometime before six o'clock, the same morning!

It was a sham from start to finish, - they were *pretending* to observe the legal formalities, but their actions were blatantly illegal, for they were in breach of their own statutes meaning their verdict was in before the procedure began! ... They were acting outside their own laws. And so, illegally they went through their trials during the night, and the Lord Jesus was nailed to the cross by nine

o'clock in the morning. Three hours later a supernatural darkness covered the land during which Jesus suffered the wrath and judgment of His Father from noon to three o'clock. He was dead at three o'clock, and buried before sunset. ... The whole proceedings were a mockery to the due process of law ... but it was the only way they could 'get rid of' Jesus, - by religious men lying and cheating!

A little slower ... Here is what was happening ... Jesus was first of all led into the presence of Annas, the High Priest Emeritus, the *real* power behind the Sanhedrin (Jn. 18:13,14). Obviously, he had no charge to lay against Jesus for he **Jn.18:19** asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. ... Annas had not done his homework for he did not know what to charge Jesus with! ... He had no justifiable reason why Jesus was standing in judgment before him! ... It was a truly nonsensical line of questioning for he was asking and needing Jesus to implicate Himself by way of what He had been doing and teaching ... Annas had 'nothing to go on'! He had no case against or no evidence to incriminate Jesus. ... He had no crime to set before Jesus, no witnesses, no testimony ... it was the wrong time of the day for a court to sit, it was not a legitimate court, and there weren't any judges, legal authorities or anything else ... It was ridiculous!

... But Annas wanted Jesus to tell him about His disciples, - His associates in his alleged crime ... whatever His crime was, ... and he also wanted Jesus to tell him about some of the alleged false doctrines He was teaching. ... It is perfectly obvious Annas, - for all his years in such high authority, - 'had not a clue' about what to do with Jesus ... but such was the mountain of hatred which had been amassed against the Saviour! ... **20** Jesus answered him, I spake 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. **21** Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. ... If you are the guardian of Judaism, you ought to know, said Jesus!

At that point one of the temple officers went over and gave Jesus a thump, **22** And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? ... A bit of respect, the officer demanded, to which Jesus replied, **23** Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil [*'out of turn', disrespectfully*], bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? ... Annas was riled *before*, but now he was becoming almost uncontrollably agitated against Jesus, - he was livid! ... so, **24** Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.

... This was Jesus' second trial ... It was while Jesus was being questioned during this second trial in the official residence of Caiaphas that Peter was sitting outside in the high priest's garden (Mk. 14:53,54). It is the early hours of the morning, and voices carry. ... Mark describes the place where they interrogated Jesus as [the palace of the high priest](#) (v.54, *Heb. Kohen Gadol*), and, in particular, a section within the palace (αὐλή) which describes the open courtyard, - enclosed by a wall, and having no roof. In such a place, Jesus was shouted at, insulted, humiliated, slandered, made to feel like 'dirt' ... In that enclosure was Caiaphas, and every agitated member of the Sanhedrin ... and they were *screaming* for Jesus to be killed ... What a noise they would have made! ... And the place in which they were making this noise had no roof to keep the sound from prying ears outside ... in the garden ... where Peter was sitting around the fire ... Peter would have heard all this!

Another important factor is that they were *indeed* holding this 'court' in the palace of the high priest, [Jn. 18:28](#) *Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.* ... That *too*, was illegal, for they had no lawful jurisdiction, except when they met in the temple. They were meeting in the wrong place ... But not only were they meeting in the wrong place, it was also the wrong time to meet for it was still dark, ... and another problem, - and they knew this, - was that if they had brought Jesus into the temple on a feast/holy day, they would have defiled the temple sanctuary ... Therefore, they held their court in the wrong place and at the wrong time. It was another breach of their laws! ... And something else, Jewish law only allowed the Sanhedrin to *investigate* charges ... not to *initiate* them. ... No matter how you look at it, it was all wrong!

It did not bother them though, and in this enclosure within the palace of Caiaphas, the charge, - such as it was, - was read out against Jesus. ... A little more thought had been put into this accusation, even though it was flawed, and without any foundation. Jesus was initially charged with insurrection for it was alleged He intended to destroy the temple, the most holy place belonging to the Jews. ... The false witnesses/accusers, - who evidently could not agree among themselves (Mk. 14:56,59), and who had been bribed, - managed to orchestrate enough together to claim, [58](#) *We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.* ... Such was the spurious and ill-conceived case for the

prosecution, - feeble, disjointed, and not at all persuasive ... Jesus, of course, had never said He would destroy *The Temple*, i.e. the literal temple. Instead, earlier in His ministry, He was referring to how His own *body* would be destroyed and resurrected, **Jn. 2:19** Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. **20** Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? **21** But he spake of the temple of his body. **22** When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said. ...

From Jesus' side of the courtroom, there was *no* defence offered up for the Defendant ... as their laws decreed there ought to have been. There was a complete travesty of justice for the temple authorities had provided no-one to represent Him. ... They had not gone to look for supporters for the cause of the Saviour! ...

Caiaphas, the high priest, then stood up and went over to Jesus, - face-to-face ... his evil eyes like daggers penetrating the Son of God, - **60** *And the high priest stood up in the midst*, ... high priests did not usually do that, - they usually sat like pompous oligarchs *exuding* their authority ... but it indicates how frustrated and annoyed the Caiaphas was ... and *[he]* asked Jesus, saying, *Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?* ... Jesus was to be His own defence, but He didn't say a word, - **61** *But he held his peace, and answered nothing.* ... It is the job of the prosecution to declare what the prosecuted is guilty of, but Caiaphas wanted Jesus to incriminate Himself. That, also, is ridiculous ... You say nothing, - the burden is upon the prosecutor to make his case against you, but Caiaphas was incapable of producing any sufficient or substantive evidence against the Saviour. So he tried to put the burden on Jesus to implicate Himself. ... Caiaphas was basically saying, "Give the evidence out of Your own mouth so I can indict You ... so I can justify giving You the death penalty!" ... *Unbelievable!* ... Jesus answered him nothing, and therefore, there should have been no case to answer, **Is. 53:7** *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.*

Caiaphas pushed it further though, - he would not relent, **61** *Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?* ... Caiaphas hated having to say those words, - saying those words would have 'stuck in his throat' because he did not want to give any credence to the

Person before him as *Christ, the Son of the Blessed* ... As Peter told these same people, - and many more, - later, on the Day of Pentecost, **Acts 2:22** *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know* ... Caiaphas knew it, but tried to deny it! Actually, that was about the first legitimate thing in the whole of these so-called legal proceedings for it set out the charge against Jesus, - the charge of being *the Christ, the Son of the Blessed* ... But, as far as the high priest and the Sanhedrin wanted to make it ... the position of Jesus was one of *absolute blasphemy!*

And when Jesus *did* reply to Caiaphas, He gave him and the Sanhedrin, - in the will and plan of His Father, - the opportunity to condemn Him, **Mk. 14:62** *And Jesus said, I am [the Christ, the Son of the Blessed] ... the stating of which was like a 'red rag to a bull' ... and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. ... The high priest was 'at boiling point'! ... Sitting at the right hand of God? That is sacrilege! That is a blasphemy and a profanity ... it is a desecration of what is written in the Psalms, **Ps. 110:1** The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand ... and in the Prophets, **Dan. 7:13** I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. **14** And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed*

And, in bad temper, Caiaphas tore his clothes, **Mk. 14:63** *Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? **64** Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. ... They were raging mad for they knew what Jesus was insinuating, but at the same time, ... *success!* That is all they wanted, - no vote needed, - for they wanted to hear Jesus, - from His own lips, - incriminate Himself, so they could sentence Him to death!*

What shouts of disapproval would have arisen from that palace, from its open-air courtyard ... They all went up to Jesus, **65** *And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face [blindfold Him], and to buffet [punch] him, and to say unto him, Prophecy ... These were educated men, 'the cream of the crop' in Jerusalem ... acting no better than primitive savages ... and then Jesus was handed over to the temple guards ... and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands!*

... And Peter would have heard all this as he sat around the fire, - warming himself, with the enemies of Christ. ... What time is it? ... It wasn't yet three o'clock in the morning for the cock had not crowed. This was all happening in the wee small hours ... outside of the permitted times for the legal courts to process their cases. ... And Judas Iscariot wasn't too far away either for he also knew what was going on (*Mt. 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned*) ... But Caiaphas told those members of the Sanhedrin, in the words of Lev. 24:16, *he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, - and that was the conclusion they came to, - he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death*

... That is something else, for the Sanhedrin was only allowed to stone Him. That was bad enough, but they wanted to inflict a longer and a more painful death upon Jesus. Stoning isn't pleasant, but at least you're dead after a few minutes, or even sooner. The death they wanted for Jesus ... they wanted Him to suffer and they wanted it to last ... They wanted everyone to see Him hanging on a cross, suffering the shame and humiliation, the contempt and reproof of the worst of common criminals ... the lowest of the low! ... They wanted Jesus to hang on the cross as a public spectacle!

No wonder God judged Israel less than forty years later, in 70 AD, when He brought the Roman General Titus to destroy Jerusalem. Their temple was torn down, and they were scattered throughout the nations. ... There are no merits in rejecting Christ. Nothing good can come of turning Him away. The Lord Jesus is the *only* Saviour, and His is the *only* salvation. Our study is a lesson in how many people are passionately determined to condemn Him, and yet He died for those people who were to cry, Crucify Him, Crucify Him.

Jesus loves you ... His Father loved you so much He sent His Son into this world for you. He was unfairly judged by wicked and evil men. He was declared guilty, even though He had never done anything wrong ... He did that for our salvation ... No matter how we try to describe the scene, our attempts fall far short of what Jesus truly confronted for you and me. ... But I trust we have had a glimpse today ...

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood.