



Twelve Reasons Why **Jesus' Trial Was Illegal**

*If Jesus were tried in many of today's courts
He would be found guilty. Read here why. (Part One)*

The trial of Jesus was without legal precedent. He was fraudulently convicted by the courts of His day_ He was executed by crucifixion even though His judge found Him innocent !

Why ?

It is time we understood what was behind Jesus' crucifixion and learned the 12 outstanding reasons why the arrest, trial and conviction of Jesus were illegal.

Atheists and agnostics today try to prove that Jesus was legally crucified . Here are surprising statements from a book entitled *The Prosecution of Jesus*, by Richard Wellington Husband.

Concerning the trial of Jesus, he charges on page 281 : "The arrest was legal ... The hearing by the Sanhedrin was legal ... The course of trial in the Roman court was legal ... The conviction was legal, and was justified."

The author, a lawyer, was undoubtedly sincere in his convictions. He was a professor of

classical languages at Dartmouth College. Here is how Mr. Husband justifies his beliefs :

"The arrest" of Jesus "was legal, for it was conducted by the proper officers, acting under instructions from the Sanhedrin. There was no illegality in the circumstances under which the arrest was affected. The hearing by the Sanhedrin was legal, for it was merely a preliminary hearing, and was not a formal trial. The course of trial in the Roman court was legal, for it harmonized with the procedure shown in the sources to be pursued by governors of provinces in hearing criminal cases."

Pilate conducted himself as other judges did, contends Mr. Husband. That made it legal ! It is a strange way of reasoning. Now here is Mr. Husband's final conclusion :

"The conviction was legal, and was justified provided the evidence was sufficient to substantiate the charges, and the records," he writes, "do not prove the contrary."

Here a former professor in one of America's leading colleges contends that there is insufficient evidence in the Bible to show that any reversal of Jesus' conviction was justified. Here is a man who, if he had sat on the Sanhedrin, might have sincerely said, "He is guilty."

The Jewish point of view

I have another book before me. It contains the traditional Jewish point of view. The book is entitled

The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth . It is by Max Radin. He was a professor of law in the University of California. From page 229, I quote the following: "If he [Jesus] had said only a tithe (tenth) of the things credited to him it was enough to make an indictment."

From page 109 of this same book, I quote the following about the trial of Jesus. Mr. Radin says there is "no clear statement of how the knowledge of the trial came to those who reported it." Mr. Radin has been taught to believe that neither Matthew, Mark, Luke nor John had any personal evidence because the trial was private, a secret affair.

What he does not discuss, of course, is the possibility that Jesus, who was condemned – the One who heard everything, who was there on trial - rose from the dead and told the disciples what occurred so that they could report it to us that we might know today.

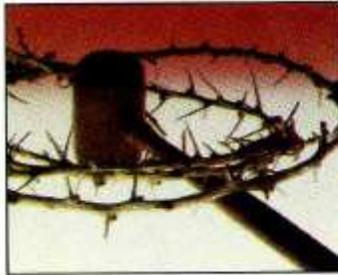
But let us continue with Max Radin's point of view. On page 231 you will discover the following statement as to what a trial in Judea was like in Jesus' day :

"We are, most of us, familiar with the procedure of criminal investigations. The accused person is arrested, arraigned before a committing magistrate, specifically accused and formally tried. He may, and he generally does, appeal to a higher court, if he is convicted. All these things take time, and there is almost necessarily an interval of weeks and months between the later stages of the procedure. But above all, the procedure is strictly regulated by law, and any serious deviation is not merely an irregularity but will probably prevent punishment from being inflicted."

Notice that most trials involving criminal procedure take weeks, if not months. Jesus' trial was completed in less than nine hours after His arrest. And it was all done in private so that there would not be any witnesses who could testify on His behalf. How does Mr. Radin reconcile these conflicting sources of evidence ?

On page 241, he reasons : "Mark's version, even by his own testimony, cannot be more than a guess. Instead of a hurried night meeting, a harsh and brief interrogatory, a disregard of established rules of evidence and procedure, the trial may have been formally correct, and the judgment even from the point of view of an upright judge just though severe."

Mr. Radin assumes that Mark was guessing. Then he assumes it could have been conducted in an entirely different manner. Yet the only extant sources of evidence for the trial come from the Bible. There is no other record to justify another point of view.



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Limits on Jews' authority

What legal authority did the Jews have to try Jesus? "According to the common view," reports Mr. Husband in his book, page 210, "the right to try capital cases," that is, cases involving death penalties, "and even the right to pronounce sentences, still rested with the Sanhedrin, but the actual penalty could not be inflicted until the governor" - that is, the Roman governor, in this case Pilate - "had given his sanction."

But this view is hardly true. The Jews not only had the power to try certain crimes, but they had the power to convict and the power to execute in all but cases of treason or sedition against Rome and Roman authority.

The assumption that Jesus' opponents had no power to execute is incorrectly based on John 18:31-32. Here the Jews had said that, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." Lifting it out of its context, critics have assumed that the Jewish nation had no lawful right whatsoever to put anyone to death. But this does not happen to be the case.

Have we forgotten how Stephen died? His enemies said, "He blasphemeth," and they stoned him to death. The Romans didn't disapprove. When Jesus first preached His sermon the day of Pentecost in Nazareth, the Jews sought to stone Him to death. If it were illegal, they wouldn't have tried it. The Romans would have pounced on them.

The elders of the nation on one occasion brought to Jesus a woman who was committing adultery. They said: "Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"

If they had no right to stone any to death, Jesus could have said simply, "Don't you know under what law you are living?" And what would they have felt like before the Romans if that would have reached Pilate's ears? But Jesus didn't say any such thing. Jesus accepted the fact that the right to execute adulteresses and other criminals existed. He told the guiltless to cast the first stone.

Paul was stoned in Asia. Not only in Judea, but in other areas of the Roman world, wherever the Jews were settled, it is plain the Jews had the legal right to execute the penalty of their law. The Romans allowed it. But why did the Jews make the statement that we find recorded in John 18:31-32?

Here is the answer: "From the earliest period the Roman governor took cognizance of all matters that had any relation to the public security or the majesty of the Empire. Consequently there was no time at which the Roman magistrate would not step in when a charge of treason

was made, or a seditious movement begun. The case against Jesus is one especially in point, for the charge against him [treason] could under no circumstances be tried by any tribunal except that of the governor."

Only when it came to treason, civil disobedience, incitement to revolution or attacks against the majesty, that is, Caesar, did the Roman government decide that it was proper that its governors or representatives should intervene. Otherwise, all local administration was carried on by the people and the regular, constituted courts of the conquered nations, of the provinces or of the allies of Rome.

The opponents of Jesus accused Him of blasphemy. But they did not want to execute Him. So they charged Him with treason before the Romans.

What the religious leaders had to do was create charges of treason against Jesus in order to bring it up to Pilate so that they would not be responsible for His death.

Summary of events

After the last supper on Passover, Jesus went out and prayed. Then Judas came with a mob. Accompanying that mob were the high priest, the judges and jury, inciting the mob as they went out to arrest Him.

After Jesus was arrested, Annas examined Him alone. He was ex-high priest.

They next took Him to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, before sunrise while it was yet night, where He was informally condemned. After sunrise, the Sanhedrin quickly condemned Him formally to make legal their previous conduct.

Then they took Him to Pilate on different charges. Pilate wanted to wash his hands of the whole affair. When Pilate found Jesus was of Galilee, he sent Him to Herod. After Herod saw Jesus and could not get anything but silence from Him, Herod decided to let Him go back to Pilate.

Then, at the second time before Pilate, the Roman governor, under pressure, gave sentence - even against his own will.

These are the six steps through which Jesus went from after midnight to nearly 9 o'clock. And at 9 o'clock He was crucified. At 3 o'clock that afternoon, He was speared in the side and killed (Matt. 27:49, Moffatt). Shortly before sunset, He was carried to the tomb. That's how quickly the world got rid of the Savior !

Judas' betrayal

"Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. Then he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude" (Luke 22:3-6).

Judas' treachery developed as a result of Jesus' rebuke for having condemned the woman who anointed Him with oil. Judas had said to Jesus, "Why didn't you give that to the poor ?" Judas wanted that money himself. He would have taken the oil, gone out and sold it, then claimed he gave it to the poor and pocketed the money. That is what he wanted to do, for he was a thief (John 12:1-8).

So he went to the chief priests and the captains, who bribed him to deliver Jesus in the

absence of the crowds who listened to Jesus. The idea was to have Jesus seized privately, so the public, especially the Galileans, would not know until it was over. The plan was to get Jesus at night, try Him at night, sentence Him just after sunrise, to make it look legal, take Him to Pilate, incite a mob to get Pilate to condemn Him, have Him crucified, if possible, in the morning, before those favoring Him would be about.

Who made up the mob that arrested Jesus ? The answer to this question brings us to the first error in Jesus' conviction.

We should now examine, point by point, the 12 primary reasons why the arrest, trial and conviction of Jesus were illegal.

First reason

The principle on which any trial may be considered illegal is that it is prejudicial against the man who is tried - that it does not allow him to have full recourse to law so that he might present his part of the case.

Now notice the steps in Jesus' arrest, trial and conviction. The first point is that *Jesus was arrested illegally*.

Consider John 18 : 2-8 : "And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place" - where Jesus was that night - "for Jesus often met there with His disciples. Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Jesus therefore ... went forward and said to them, 'Whom are you seeking ?' They answered Him, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus said to them, 'I am He.' And Judas, who betrayed Him [by a kiss], also stood with them. Then - when He said to them, 'I am He,' - they drew back and fell to the ground . Then He asked them again, 'Whom are you seeking ?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus answered, 'I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way.' "

Now continue with Luke 22:52 : "Then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come *and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Volume I, page 309 : "The Sanhedrin did not, and could not, originate charges."



There was no legal basis on which Jesus was arrested. Nobody had presented . . . evidence of guilt . . .

But in Jesus' case, it did. Here was the proper procedure, as stated by Innes in his book, *The Trial of Jesus Christ*, page 41: "The evidence of the leading witnesses constituted the charge. There was no other charge ; no more formal indictment." In Jesus' case there at first had been no witnesses presented. Opponents simply arrested and started to accuse Him.

Continuing : "Until they [the witnesses] spoke, and spoke in the public assembly, the prisoner was scarcely an accused man. When they spoke, and the evidence of two agreed

together, it formed a legal charge, libel or indictment, as well as the evidence for its truth."

Next consider that Mendelsohn writes, page 110 : "The only prosecutors known to Talmudic criminal jurisprudence are the witnesses to the crime. Their duty is to bring the matter to the cognizance of the court, and to bear witness against the criminal" - after he is arrested. "In capital brought forth no evidence whatsoever. Instead of dismissing the case they proceeded to hold an illegal court.

Why was it illegal? Mendelsohn states : "Criminal cases can be acted upon by the various courts during day time only, and by the Lesser Sanhedrins from the close of the morning service till noon, and by the Great Sanhedrin till evening" (page 112).

The trial of Jesus was begun at night in the hours of early morning, without any witnesses to defend Jesus.

Here is what Maimonides writes in *Sanhedrin III* : "The reason why the trial of a capital offence could not be held at night is because ... the examination of such a charge is like the diagnosing of a wound - in either case a more thorough and searching examination can be made by daylight."

The Mishna says, *Sanhedrin IV*, 1 : "Let a capital offense be tried during the day, but suspend it at night." Once more the opponents of Jesus violated their law in order to rid themselves of Jesus and His teachings.

***Was Jesus legally crucified ? Some would like
to have you believe so ! It is time you
became aware of what really happened at Jesus' trial ! (Part Two)***

In the previous issue we learned of the shocking events surrounding the arrest of Jesus. We also discovered that prominent writers have been led into believing that Jesus' arrest, trial and conviction were legal and just !

We learned the Jewish point of view - and the means by which the mob in Jesus' day brought Jesus to trial.

Then we learned the first four reasons why Jesus' arrest and trial were absolutely illegal and a mockery of justice :

First four reasons

First, *Jesus was arrested illegally*. He was arrested secretly, by night, on no formal charge of any crime, by those who were to be His judges.

Second, Jesus was illegally subjected to *a secret preliminary a capital examination 'by night*, contrary to the law.

Third, *the indictment against Jesus was illegal* because the judges themselves brought up an unprovable charge against Jesus without any prior testimony by witnesses.

Fourth, *the trial of Jesus began illegally before sunrise* in order that no one could testify on Jesus' behalf.

Now to continue with this second installment.

Fifth reason

In the case of Jesus, *the Sanhedrin was illegally convened to try a capital offense on a day before an annual Sabbath.*

Notice why : "They shall not judge on the eve of the Sabbath, nor on any festival," says the Mishna, "Sanhedrin" IV, 1.

In Wise's Martyrdom of Jesus, page 67, we read the following conclusive – and shocking – evidence : "No court of justice in Israel was permitted to hold sessions on the Sabbath or on any of the seven biblical Holy Days. In cases of capital crime, no trial could be commenced on Friday or the day previous to any Holy Day, because it was not lawful either to adjourn such cases longer than overnight, or to continue them on the Sabbath or Holy Day."

The opponents of Jesus even violated their law by arresting Jesus on the day before an annual Sabbath. They arrested Him at the beginning of Wednesday in A.D. 31; the first annual Sabbath that year was Thursday.

Sixth reason

The trial of Jesus was illegal because it was concluded in one day.

We read from Jewish law : "A criminal case resulting in the acquittal of the accused may terminate the same day on which the trial began. But if a sentence of death is to be pronounced, it cannot be concluded before the following day" (*Mishna*, "Sanhedrin" IV, 1).

This was to allow sufficient opportunity for any witnesses in support of the accused to present themselves. The court did not want to allow Jesus this opportunity.

Seventh reason

The indictment against Jesus was false and its use illegal because it was founded upon Jesus' uncorroborated statement. The court pronounced sentence on Jesus with no supporting evidence whatever.

Consider : The only evidence presented by witnesses to the court was given by two false witnesses. But their testimony was not even used by the court in sentencing Jesus to death. Here is what happened : Two false witnesses testified that Jesus said, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands" (Mark 14:58). The Jews used this belated statement as an indictment against Jesus. But this piece of evidence was not what Jesus said.

He never said the words *that is made with hands*. Jesus was not referring to the physical Temple of Herod erected by human hands, but to His body (John 2:19, 21), which would be raised in three days.

Then "the high priest arose and said to Him, 'Do You answer nothing ? What is it that these men testify against You ? But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, 'I adjure You by the living God that You tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God' " (Matt. 26:62-63).

The question the high priest asked Jesus had nothing to do with the indictment! Jesus was indicted on the false charge that He would destroy the physical Temple and rebuild it in

three days' time. But the court condemned Him on another matter altogether.

Notice the facts. They asked : "Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.'

Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, 'He has spoken blasphemy ! What further need do we have of witnesses ? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy !

What do you think ?

They answered and said, 'He is deserving of death'" (verses 63- 66).

Jesus was indicted on one charge, tried on another and condemned on His own testimony. Jesus was not condemned because He said, "Within three days I will build this temple." He was immediately condemned on the charge of blasphemy.

Here is what the Jewish scholar Maimonides wrote in his book : "We have it as a fundamental principle of our jurisprudence, that no one can bring an accusation against himself. Should a man make confession of guilt before a legally constituted tribunal, such confession is not to be used against him unless properly attested by two other witnesses" ("Sanhedrin" IV, 2).

Jesus was condemned on His own testimony, even though His testimony was not proved blasphemous.

The court didn't even examine Him according to the law to see whether His statement was blasphemy. They only demanded, "Are you the Son of God ?" And He responded : "You 're going to see the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Was this blasphemy ? Of course not !

Jesus did not even refer directly to Himself. He merely said : "the son of man." The court did not seek to prove who the "son of man" was.

They knew, of course, that Jesus meant Himself. For all through His ministry, they came and purred in front of Him, and asked : "'How long do you keep us in doubt ? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe.' "

But as soon as Jesus even gave an indirect statement at the trial, they did not doubt whom He meant by "son of man." On this testimony Jesus was condemned despite the scripture in Psalm 110. Even Mr. Radin admits that Jesus' testimony was not blasphemy. On pages 248 and 249 he says :

"The 'blasphemy' which the Pentateuch mentions is a literal cursing of God or a direct defiance of him. The only pentateuchal reference makes this clear. It is in Leviticus, chapter 24, and the incident which gave rise to the statute indicates the character of the offense of blasphemy in Jewish law. The half Egyptian had cursed God - the - Israelitish God - as under the circumstances of the quarrel there described, he would have been likely enough to do. No such thing could have been charged against Jesus by his most inveterate enemies."

Yet the religious leaders did this very thing !

Now consider another violation of law in extracting this testimony from Jesus :

"No attempt is ever made to lead a man on to self-incrimination. Moreover, a voluntary confession on his [the defendant's] part is not admitted in evidence, and therefore not competent to convict him, unless a legal number of witnesses minutely corroborate his self-accusation" (Mendelsohn, *Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews*, page 133).

Eighth reason

The condemnation of Jesus was illegal because the merits of the defense were not considered.

When they heard Jesus' statement, the high priest shouted, "He has spoken blasphemy !" But the law in Deuteronomy 13: 14 says, "Then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently."

The law in the *Mishna* says, "The judges shall weigh the matter in the sincerity of their conscience" ("Sanhedrin" IV, 5).

Ninth reason

The condemnation of Jesus by part of the Sanhedrin was illegal because those who would have voted against the condemnation of Jesus were not there.

Notice what took place at Jesus' trial before dawn, according to Mark 14:64: "'You have heard the blasphemy ! What do you think ? And they all condemned Him to be worthy of death ."

It was unanimous. There was no investigation, no examination to see if He did or did not blaspheme. They just used His testimony against Him without further investigation. They all did it immediately, instantaneously, simultaneously.

It was mob spirit that condemned Jesus ! Here is what Mendelsohn states of such a procedure : "A simultaneous and unanimous verdict of guilt rendered on the day of the trial has the effect of an acquittal. "

The verdict against Jesus was simultaneous and unanimous, although the law required at least one of the council to serve as a defense counsel.

The proper method of voting was to have "the judges each in his turn absolve or condemn" (*Mishna*, "Sanhedrin" XV, 5) .

"The members of the Sanhedrin were seated in the form of a semicircle at the extremity of which a secretary was placed, whose business it was to record the votes.

One of these secretaries recorded the votes in favor of the accused, the other against him," states the *Mishna*, "Sanhedrin" IV, 3.

"In ordinary cases the judges voted according to seniority, the oldest commencing ; in a capital case, the reverse order was followed.

That the younger members of the Sanhedrin should not be influenced by the views or the arguments of their more mature, more experienced colleagues, the junior judge was in these cases always the first to pronounce for or against conviction," says Benny, in *Criminal Code of the Jews*, pp. 73-74.

Furthermore, the high priest rent or tore his clothes at the trial (Mark 14:63, Matt. 26:65). In Leviticus 21: 10 the high priest is forbidden to do so: "And he who is the high priest among his brethren, on whose head the anointing oil was poured and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes." See also Leviticus 10:6. He tore his outer garment to stir up emotion, to prejudice others.

The high priest should have remained calm so that no mistake in judgment would be made. In Jesus' trial none of these requirements were followed .

Let Wise's book, *Martyrdom of Jesus*, page 74, explain the law on this point : "If none of the judges defend the culprit, i.e., all pronounce him guilty, having not defender in the

court, the verdict guilty was invalid and sentence of death could not be executed."

Jesus was condemned contrary to the law !

Now notice which members of the Sanhedrin were missing during the trial.

Take the case of Joseph of Arimathaea. After Jesus was crucified, we read from Luke 23:50-51, Authorized Version, "And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor ; and he was a good man, and a just." The word *counsellor* is admitted by all hands to represent a member of the Sanhedrin. "The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them" - and neither had Nicodemus.

In Mark's account we learn that all those present condemned Jesus instantaneously and unanimously.

But since the night meeting was illegal, Joseph of Arimathaea was not present. The opponents of Jesus wanted to make sure he could not defend Jesus. Think of the utter lack of any fairness in this trial !

Tenth reason

The sentence against Jesus was pronounced in a place forbidden by law.

After the mob seized Christ, they led Him away, after having been at Annas', and brought Him into the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. The trial of Jesus wasn't held in court! Read Luke 22: 54: "Then, having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house."

The court building wasn't legally to be opened until after sunrise.

According to the law, "A sentence of death can be pronounced only so long as the Sanhedrin holds its sessions in the appointed place," says Maimonides, in his book, Section XIV. The Talmud says, "After leaving the hall Gazith [the court] no sentence of death can be passed upon anyone soever" (From Bab. Talmud, " Abodah Tarath" or "Of Idolatry," ch. 1, fol. 8). A sentence of death may be passed only in a legal court, not in " some private home, as occurred in Jesus' case.

Eleventh reason

Most Sanhedrin members themselves were legally disqualified to try Jesus. According to Mendelsohn, *Hebrew Maxims and Rule*, page 182, "The robe of the unfairly elected judge is to be respected not more than the blanket of the ass. "

Some of the judges were elected unfairly. We have the names from the Bible and from Josephus of most of the men who were on the Sanhedrin at the time of Jesus.

Such- men as Caiaphas, .Eleazar, Jonathon, Theophilus, Mathias, Ishmael, Simon, John, Alexander, Ananias and many others were, according to Josephus, recipients of bribes and appointed by members of the family who themselves had no right to sit on it, bought their offices and were disrespected by their people.

There were 12 ex-high priests living at this one time, all part of the Sanhedrin. The Bible expressly requires a man to be high priest throughout his lifetime, at the end of which another took his place. But under the Romans, high priests could be voted into office year by year.

The whole official arrangement - the whole choice of offices - was wrong.

But there was another reason that disqualified almost all Jesus' judges. It is this : "Nor

must there be on the judicial bench either a relation, or a particular friend, or an enemy of either the accused or the accuser," writes Mendelsohn, page 108.

Many of the judges were Jesus' enemies. They even paid bribe money to betray Him. In Benny's work, *Criminal Code of the Jews*, page 37, this surprising statement is found : "Nor under any circumstances was a man known to be at enmity with the accused person permitted to occupy a position among his judges."

Everybody knew that the Sadducees and Pharisees were at outs with Jesus. Yet they were permitted to try Him.

Twelfth reason

The court illegally switched the charges against Jesus from blasphemy to sedition and treason before Pilate. Observe how it was done !

The next step in Jesus' trial was to take Him to the legal court for a mock, private trial at sunrise.



Pilate began to see . . .
trouble brewing. He had
a mob on his hands. This
was trial by mob rule!

As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council" - now that they had already condemned Him of blasphemy, they were going to take Him to court for a mock trial ! - "saying, 'If You are the Christ, tell us.' "

Notice that they repeated the same questions over again. "But He [Jesus] said to them, 'If I tell you, you will by no means believe. And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go. Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.' " They had to make this trial look legal.

So "they all said 'Are You then the Son of God ?' And He said to them, 'You rightly say that I am.' And they said, 'What further testimony do we need ? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.' Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate" (Luke 22:66-71, 23: 1).

This meeting probably didn't last any more than a few minutes ! Now their trial, which was illegally conducted in the private home of Caiaphas, was outwardly legalized.

But instead of taking Jesus out to be stoned for blasphemy, they switched the charges after the court was dismissed !

They took Him to Pilate, and here is what we read in John 18:28-31 :

"Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium [hall of judgment], and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. Pilate then went out to them and said, 'What accusation do

you bring against this Man ? They answered and said to him, 'If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you. Then Pilate said to them, 'You take Him and judge Him according to your law.'"

Pilate was difficult to convince. He didn't want to be bothered at this hour in the morning. But the enemies of Jesus replied , "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." Why wasn't it lawful ?

Let Luke give the surprising answer : "And they began to accuse Him, saying, 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King" (Luke 23:2).

Notice that the Jews did not charge Jesus with blasphemy. Had they done so, Pilate would have told the Jews not to bother him, but to deal with Jesus according to their own law by stoning. The religious leaders were afraid of their own people !

So they trumped up other and new charges against Jesus before Pilate. Pilate now had reason to be surprised. The only cases for which the Jews could not try a man involved sedition or treason.

"Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews ? ' Jesus answered him, 'Are you speaking for yourself on this, or did others tell you this about Me ?' Pilate answered, 'Am I a Jew?'" He didn't like the Jews, did he ? "'Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done ?'

"Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants [the disciples] would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here' " - not of this time, not of this world order.

"Pilate therefore said to Him, 'Are You a king then?' Jesus answered, 'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.

Pilate said to Him, 'What is truth ?'" Jesus chose not to answer that.

Pilate finds Jesus innocent "And when he had said this, he [Pilate] went out again to the Jews, and said to them, 'I find no fault in Him at all' " (John 18:33-38) .

When Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee, he told the Jews to take Him to Herod: "And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time" for the Passover (Luke 23:7).

After an interview with Jesus, Herod sent Him back to Pilate. To frighten the Roman governor, the opponents of Jesus stirred up the mob outside.

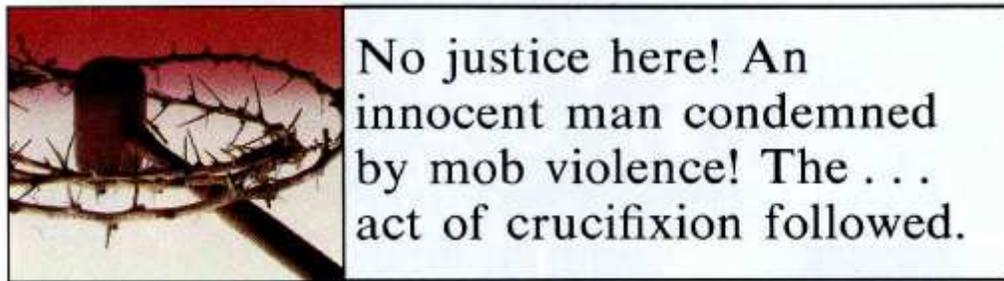
Pilate began to see that there was trouble brewing. He had a mob on his hands. This was trial by mob rule ! So Pilate took Jesus, terribly scourged Him, let the soldiers plait on Him a crown of thorns and array Him in purple.

Pilate brought Jesus out again and shouted to the mob : "'Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him . . . when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him ! Pilate said to them, 'You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.' "

The opponents answered and said, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die" - and now for the first time they reveal to Pilate why they condemned Him - "because He made Himself the Son of God" (John 19:4-7). They were getting very angry.

Pilate became frightened. He didn't want to have anything happen for which he would be held responsible by the Roman gods.

Upon this, Pilate definitely sought to release Him (John 19: 12), for there were no witnesses whatever in this trial before Pilate. The mob had commenced accusing Jesus without proof, without witnesses, without testimony.



Then the ignorant mob cried out : "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend." They were threatening Pilate with loss of his office. Matthew 27 :24-26 picks the story up :

"When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it . ' "

The ignorant mob responded : "His blood be on us and on our children : " What they were really saying is : "You execute Him. We don't want to stone Him; we want you to execute Him."

Then Pilate "scourged Jesus, [and] he delivered Him to be crucified." The purpose of scourging was to prepare a criminal for death.

But notice - Pilate did not even give a formal decision against Jesus Christ. He just turned Him over to the soldiers to do what the mob wanted.

Jesus crucified though found innocent by Pilate

That is where the trial of Jesus abruptly broke off. No justice here ! An innocent man condemned by mob violence ! The dastardly act of crucifixion followed.

Yet some today would still falsely claim, in the face of all this evidence, that Jesus' trial was legal, and His crucifixion justified.

Most of us have not really examined the trial of Jesus before. Just look at this trial. What a mockery of justice it was ! Can you imagine what it would be like if you had been on trial, to be spitefully treated as these thrill-seeking soldiers treated Jesus ?

What consideration, what fairness would have been given you ?

All this suffering Jesus endured to pay the penalty of sin for you ! Yet not you only, but to pay the penalty of the sin of the whole world. It is time you personally were made to look at the last hours of Jesus in mortal flesh to see what a miscarriage of justice led up to the crucifixion – what a mockery was made of trial - and to understand the reasons why the conviction of Jesus was an utter fraud - all voluntarily endured by Christ to pay the penalty of your sin In your stead !