



THE SIGNAL

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The so-called trial of Jesus Christ is the greatest travesty of justice that mankind has ever produced. While others down through history have been falsely accused and unfairly tried, none of them were perfect. Our Lord's perfection far exceeded any accusation that could ever be conjured up.

Having been betrayed by Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, Jesus was taken to the residence of the high priest. Both Annas and Caiaphas are referred to as holding this office. Annas had held it for years, followed by several of his sons. Caiaphas, his son-in-law, held the position at the time of Jesus' arrest. The palace where the first stage of His trial took place was the home of these families. It sat off the street surrounded by a wall and entered through a gate. It was built around a center courtyard where some of the events recorded in the gospels took place. That night the Sanhedrin assembled, determined to find Jesus guilty of a crime worthy of capital punishment.

The Sanhedrin had seventy-one members—some from the high priest's offices, scribes, pharisees, and Sadducees. This supreme court presided over Jewish life with much influence and power.

The Old Testament guidelines for those accused of a crime were fair and equitable:

1. The trial must be public, held during daylight with opportunity for witnesses.
2. Any charge must be corroborated by testimonies of two reliable witnesses.
3. Perjury was a crime in itself, incurring the punishment for committing the crime.
4. If the death penalty was declared, the witnesses must start the execution [Deut. 17]; Mosaic law required stoning.
5. A capital offense requires a full day to pass before execution during which the court was to fast and contemplate their decision.

All of these provisions were ignored by the court in trying our Lord. Jesus' trial had two parts: the Jewish segment held before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin; and the Gentile part before Pilate and

Herod. The trial took place at night, not daytime. It was in the high priest's home, not in public in the temple. Charges could not be verified by hired witnesses. The verdict was carried out the same day, which was not allowed. Two hundred soldiers with vicious weapons were there to prevent any response from Jesus' supporters.

Jewish leaders were still enraged by Jesus' overturning the money-changers' tables and driving merchants out of the temple. They resented his debunking their extra-biblical teaching and rabbinical commentary. They envied his miracles which they could not disprove. Too many witnesses testified to their veracity. John's account says the high priest asked Jesus about his disciples and doctrine. Jesus replied all He taught was done openly in the temple and synagogue: "In secret have I said nothing." One was irritated and slapped his face, saying He disrespected them. Annas sent him to Caiaphas who sent him to the Sanhedrin. False witnesses were sought but could not agree. By law the Sanhedrin could only hear (not initiate) charges against an accused. But they acted as prosecuting attorneys.

Matthew recorded that two witnesses agreed He said He would destroy the Temple made with hands and in three days. What He really said was, "Destroy this Temple [His own body], and in three days I will raise it up." So our Lord was accused of blasphemy which required the death sentence. The perfect Son of God was found guilty by sinful man.

"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. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin..." [Isaiah 53:7,10] Halelujah, what a Savior!

Thank you for helping us to broadcast this glorious gospel!

Your servant,
Chris Lamb

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