

THE SIX TRIALS OF CHRIST

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Chapter 8

THE TRIAL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN AT DAYBREAK

It is shocking to find how few who write about the trials of the Lord even deal with this trial. Edersheim passes over it with just a few sentences. Many others do not even mention it at all, or combine it with the previous trial before Caiaphas. It is true that two of the Gospel writers pass over it with just a summary word, but even this is a very significant word. Dr. Luke alone brings out the details as to what took place. But in passing over events, let us remind ourselves that Luke and John pass over completely the trial before Caiaphas with the exception of referring to Peter's denials, yet no one would dare deny its importance. Even those books devoted to being verse-by-verse expositions of the Gospels often omit this trial by merely referring the person to see some other passage for the exposition -- which passage has nothing to do with this trial.

Here is what the Scripture says occurred.

"When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor." (Matthew 27:1-2)

"And straightway in the morning the chief priests held consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate."

What Matthew and Mark give in a summary statement, Luke gives in fuller detail.

"And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth" (Luke 22:66-71)

WHAT IS TAKING PLACE

Let us consider point-by-point what is taking place.

:66 -- **"And as soon as it was day . . . "**

All three Gospels mention this fact. The day has dawned. Thus this trial can in no way be confused with these trials that were carried on during the night. This is an entirely new trial. The fact is this is the legal ecclesiastical trial or religious trial. All that had transpired during the night was illegal, and every member of the Sanhedrin knew it. If it hadn't been, there is no reason for them to meet again after sunup; but the very fact that they all meet again after sunup to ratify and legalize the illegal action that they took in the early morning stands as condemnation to them all. The very fact, furthermore, that the entire Sanhedrin meets and does so in their judgment hall shows that they do intend for this to be a legal trial and handled according to their code of jurisprudence. They are officially trying the case.

It will be before this same body that Peter and John will be questioned (Acts 4:5-22). Then once again did they appear before the same body (Acts 5:27-42). Stephen also had his day to witness to them (Acts 6:8-7:60). Later on Paul is brought before this tribunal (Acts 22:30-23:10).

Many things are different in reference to this trial when compared to the trial that had occurred in the darkness before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.

WHAT WAS DIFFERENT?

The Place is Different.

Previously it was at the home of Caiaphas. Now it is at their council hall.

The Time is Different

It was dark then -- before the crowing of the cock. It is light now; morning has come.

The Officer-in-charge is Different

The high priest, Caiaphas, was officiating when the trial was conducted in his home. Now nothing is mentioned of Caiaphas and the implication is that he is in no way acting as president of the Sanhedrin, which action at the previous trial was completely contrary to the rules of the Sanhedrin.

The Procedure is Different

Before Caiaphas, the first thing they sought to do was to secure witnesses. Now there is no mention of witnesses whatever as this did not work out satisfactorily. They seek to convict CHRIST alone on His own testimony which was the end result of the trial before Caiaphas. After CHRIST makes the statement in this trial that they desire, they say that

there is no need for witnesses. Thus they seek to get around both the Law, and their own code by this act.

The Action is Different

Caiaphas rent his clothes previously; no such action occurred at this trial.

CHRIST's Answer is Different

Previously, when He was asked under oath by the high priest if He were the CHRIST, the Son of GOD, His answer was "Yes, I am." Then He spoke of sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of Heaven. Now they do not put Him under oath.

"Art thou the Christ?", they said, "tell us."

"If I tell you," replied JESUS, **"ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God"**

"Art thou then the Son of God?", They all asked.

"Ye say that I am." or "It is true, I am." (Luke 22:67-70)

The Subsequent Action is Different

At the conclusion of this trial, they did not take a voice vote as had previously been done, but now they merely stand and indicate by this action their decision. They lead JESUS out immediately to take Him to Pilate. There is no violence in this court as there was after the previous trial.

The People Present At the Trial are Different

There is no indication of anyone present at this session of the Sanhedrin other than its members, while the servants of the high priest, officers and at least two disciples, Peter and John, were present the previous night. All the denials of Peter had taken place at the previous trials and no such events occurred at this trial.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DAY

Before we leave the truth that it is now morning, we need to remind ourselves that this morning was the day when Israel moved out of the land of Egypt to the Red Sea having partaken of the Passover lamb the night before and applied its blood to their dwelling. What a day of deliverance for Israel it was, and it was to be commemorated each year -- and to day was that day. While Israel had deliverance, there was no deliverance for the Lord. He was paying the price for deliverance and redemption of others -- His own blood: **"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your Fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"** (I Peter 1:18-19).

WILLFUL BLINDNESS AND WILLFUL REJECTION

"And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together."

The minute that the Sanhedrin could legally assemble they did so because they wanted to hurry this up before the populous could get wind of what was happening. It is probably close to 6 A.M.. Normally the Sanhedrin did not assemble until after the morning sacrifice at 9 A.M., but they cannot wait that long this day. This is not a normal day. The morning and the evening sacrifice this day will be the person of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

"And led him into their council," i.e., into their council chamber or meeting hall.

:67 -- **". . . saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us."**

Literally their first question was "If (as you say is true) you are the MESSIAH, tell us once and for all."

". . . and He answered them: If I should tell you, you will in no wise believe."

This is a double negative with the aorist subjunctive which gives the strongest possible negation. CHRIST's point is that they are not about to be convinced by anything He says. He had told them in the darkness of the morning hour and look what they did to Him. Will they do any differently now? CHRIST says they will not.

". . . and if I should ask (you), you will in no wise answer."

That is, you members of the Sanhedrin will not enter into a fair discussion with Me. If I interrogate you as what the MESSIAH will be and do, and whether these are fulfilled in Me, you will in no wise give Me an honest answer. You are resolved not to listen to truth but to condemn Me to death.

Previously CHRIST had asked them questions, but they would not answer, simply because they came each time to a wrong conclusion.

When they didn't want to accept the conclusion, they refused to answer the question (Matthew 22:41-46). Thus the issue is brought to the front and exposed to the light: the issue is they will not believe. The problem is willful blindness and willful rejection.

THE PROOF OF JESUS' MESSIAHSHIP

Having stated this CHRIST then replies:

"And from henceforth the Son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

When asked whether He were the MESSIAH, He replies He is the Son of man and the

throne-sitter. This is the last time CHRIST refers to Himself as the Son of man. Again the reference is to Daniel 7:13-14: **"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. 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."**

The Sanhedrin, knowing the Old Testament prophecies, knew that the throne-sitter would be the Son of GOD: **"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool"** (Psalm 110:1). They therefore interrogate Him further.

"And they all said: Are you then the Son of God?" This is the issue upon which they have decided to condemn Him.

"And He declared to them: You say that I am!"

Here is a Greek idiom for "Yes, I am."

CHRIST combines three epithets and claims them all: MESSIAH, Son of Man, and Son of GOD. The last involved both deity and humanity and was the one the Sanhedrin refused to accept.

Not one of them will ever be able to say: He never told us who He was.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL VERDICT AGAINST CHRIST

"And they said: What further need have we of witnesses? for we ourselves have heard from His own mouth."

They had not called witnesses.

They say now we do not need them.

We ourselves have all witnessed what He said.

This makes about 70 witnesses who have heard His blasphemy.

On account of His own testimony, they condemn JESUS to death. They had previously reached the verdict that for JESUS to claim to be the Son of GOD was wrong and necessitated that He die. It is exactly as CHRIST said. They are not in truth trying the case. They are not interested in evidence or discussion or witnesses. They will make no reply to reason or logic. They have completely and totally rejected light since the day they committed the unpardonable sin, so there is nothing left to them but darkness and hardness of heart. They meant not to try the case, but **"to put him to death"** (Matthew 27:1).

THE JEWS ALONE DID NOT KILL CHRIST

The Sanhedrin in court session has officially ratified the action taken during the

darkness of the morning. There was physical light now, but still great spiritual darkness. They had made an attempt to legalize their illegal actions. But, as A.T. Robertson says, "No ratification of a wrong can make it right."

The work of the Sanhedrin is officially over, but they cannot rest for they must now deliver the Lord over to Pilate and will stop short of nothing but His death. JESUS is now bound: **"And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate"** (Mark 15:1). This is contrary to their own code of conduct in a criminal case, but they are forced into it in order to secure from Pilate the verdict of death which they want. They cannot turn back now; their work is not yet over. They will not rest until they stand beneath His cross with folded arms and mock.

Previously CHRIST had predicted **"he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes . . ."** (Matthew 16:21). And again, **"Behold, we go to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles . . ."** (Matthew 20:18-19).

Thus far every word has been established. The Jews have had their part in His condemnation; now the Gentiles will have their part so that the whole world will stand guilty before GOD that the Lord might have mercy on all and to all to offer them salvation by grace alone.

~ end of chapter 8 ~
