

190. The Gospel of John 18:19-24

Jesus on Trial-Part 2

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This morning in our study in the Gospel of John, we are currently studying Chapter 18.

John 18 starts out with Jesus and His disciples in the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus is spending some time with His Father in prayer before His crucifixion.

During that time, Judas shows up with over 600 Roman soldiers and Temple police all carrying lanterns, torches, and weapons—

John 18:12 (NKJV)

¹² Then the detachment *of troops* and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him.

¹³ And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year.

This would be the first of two trials that Jesus would endure that morning before being crucified—the first would be a *religious* trial and the second a *civil* trial.

The first trial took place before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high council—the second one before Pilate, the Roman governor of the region.

If we combine the accounts from all four Gospels—we learn that each trial had three phases.

The Religious Trial

After they arrested Jesus, they first led Him to Annas.

This was the **first phase** of the religious trial—and only John records that Jesus was brought to Annas first.

As we said last time, Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas (the official high priest appointed by Rome)—whereas Annas was recognized by the Jewish people as the *rightful* and *legal* high priest (the law of God mandated that the Jewish high priest served for life).

Again, John's account of the religious portion of the trial shows that Jesus was first brought before Annas who was the real power behind the office of high priest.

The **second phase** was before Caiaphas and some of the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:57–68; Mark 14:53–65; Luke 22:54).

The **third phase** of the religious trial was after sunrise that morning as the full Sanhedrin confirmed the decision reached at the earlier hearing (Matthew 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66–71).

The Civil Trial

The Lord's civil trial also had three phases:

The **first phase** was before Pilate (Matthew 27:2, 11–14; Mark 15:1–5; Luke 23:1–5; John 18:28–38).

The **second phase** was before Herod (Luke 23:6–12).

And the **third phase** was before Pilate again (Matthew 27:15–26; Mark 15:6–15; Luke 23:13–25; John 18:39–19:16).

1. The Religious Trial of Jesus—verse 13-24

A. Jesus stands before Annas

John 18:12–13 (NKJV)

¹² Then the detachment *of troops* and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him.

¹³ And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year...

At this point it is still very early in the morning—probably sometime between 3:30-4:00am.

John 18:19-24 (NKJV)

¹⁹ The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine. ²⁰ Jesus answered him, “I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. ²¹ Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said.” ²² And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, “Do You answer the high priest like that?” ²³ Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?” ²⁴ Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

This now introduces us to Caiaphas—about whom John makes the statement in verse 14: “**Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people**”

That statement was recorded by John in Chapter 11:49-52:

John 11:49–52 (NKJV)

⁴⁹ And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰ nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.” ⁵¹ Now this he did not say on his own *authority*; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.

The fact that God prophesied thru an unbeliever (and a corrupt unbeliever at that) like Caiaphas is troubling to some—but God will even use the mouths of unbelievers to proclaim His truth if it suits His purposes—even as He spoke thru a donkey in the Old Testament. (Numbers 22:28)

One commentator has this to say about Caiaphas—

“Joseph Caiaphas had been appointed high priest in A.D. 18 by Valerius Gratus, the same Roman prefect who had deposed his father-in-law Annas three years earlier.”

He remained in office until A.D. 36 when the Romans removed him. Caiaphas's tenure as high priest was one of the longest in the first century, which reveals his cunning and opportunistic nature. That he proposed killing Jesus to preserve his and the Sanhedrin's power (John 11:48) demonstrates his utter ruthlessness."

B. Jesus stands before Caiaphas

John 18:23-24 (NKJV)

²³ Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?" ²⁴ Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

That is all John tells us about the religious portion of Jesus' trial that morning—for a more complete look at what happened, we need to turn to the synoptic Gospels—

Matthew 26:57, 59–60a (NKJV)

⁵⁷ And those who had laid hold of Jesus led *Him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled... ⁵⁹ Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, ⁶⁰ but found none...

Mark tells us, "For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree." (Mark 14:56 NKJV)

As we pointed out last time—this was a total kangaroo court.

They broke every law God established for providing a fair trial to someone accused of a crime—especially if they were charged with a capital crime.

One glaring violation was that—according to Jewish law, all evidence had to be verified by at least two witnesses, who were separately examined and could not have contact with each other (to keep them from colluding)—and their testimonies had to agree—"*In the mouths of 2 or 3 witnesses a thing shall be established (in a Jewish court of law).*" (Deuteronomy 19:15)

Furthermore, according to Jewish law, if a person gave false testimony (committed perjury) in a capital offense trial—it was punishable by death—and yet nothing was done to the many false witnesses in Jesus' trial.

Matthew 26:59–63a (NKJV)

⁵⁹ Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, ⁶⁰ but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward ⁶¹ and said, "This *fellow* said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.' " ⁶² And the high priest arose and said to Him, "Do You answer nothing? What *is it* these men testify against You?" ⁶³ But Jesus kept silent...

This was prophesied by Isaiah—

Isaiah 53:7 (NKJV)

⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

The accusation against Jesus given by false witnesses was—**“This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.’**”

This takes us back to something Jesus had said near the beginning of His ministry—something that was misunderstood back then and used against Him right here:

John 2:13–22 (NKJV)

¹³ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. ¹⁵ When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. ¹⁶ And He said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!” ¹⁷ Then His disciples remembered that it was written, “*Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.*” ¹⁸ So the Jews answered and said to Him, “What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?” ¹⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” ²⁰ Then the Jews said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” ²¹ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. ²² Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said. [See Psalm 16:8-11; Matthew 12:39-40]

How often people read the Bible in general or the words of Jesus in particular and pull something out of context or come to a hasty conclusion (a false interpretation)—and run with it as Jesus’ enemies did with many of the statements He made during His earthly ministry.

Matthew 26:63 (NKJV)

⁶³ But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!”

The Law of Moses required that a Jew testify when put under oath by the judge in a court of law—or in this case by the high priest (Leviticus 5:1).

But Jewish law also mandated that a person accused of a crime could not testify against himself.

Matthew 26:63-66 (NKJV)

⁶³ But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!” ⁶⁴ 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* [a reference to YHWH], *and coming on the clouds of heaven.*” ⁶⁵ 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!” ⁶⁶ What do you think?” They answered and said, “He is deserving of death.”

The law of Moses stated that blasphemy was a capital offense. (Leviticus 24:16)

Matthew 26:67 (NKJV)

⁶⁷ Then they spat in His face...

In that culture, to spit in someone’s face was the worst thing you could do to show your utter contempt and disdain for them. They refused to believe they were spitting in the face of God—the Lord of glory, God in human form—and the One who created them.

But that wasn’t all they did to the One who loved them and was about to give His life for them.

Matthew 26:67–68 (NKJV)

⁶⁷ Then they spat in His face and beat Him [with closed fists]; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, ⁶⁸ saying, “Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?”

Luke 22:63–65 (NKJV)

⁶³ Now the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him. ⁶⁴ And having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, “Prophecy! Who is the one who struck You?” ⁶⁵ And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him.

Isaiah tells us they not only beat Jesus—but they also pulled His beard out with their hands thus disfiguring Him:

Isaiah 52:13–15 (NLT)

¹³ See, my servant will prosper; he will be highly exalted. ¹⁴ But many were amazed when they saw him. His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human, and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man. ¹⁵ And he will startle many nations. Kings will stand speechless in his presence. For they will see what they had not been told; they will understand what they had not heard about.

Isaiah 53:2 (NLT)

² ...There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.

And that brings us to the third phase of the religious trial Jesus endured that morning:

C. Jesus stands before council

Luke 22:63, 66 (NKJV)

⁶³ Now the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him...⁶⁶ As soon as it was day [i.e., ‘the sun had risen’], the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council...

At this point, I’d like to read you one author’s comments about justice and jurisprudence in Israel:

“The Jewish people of Jesus’ day were justly proud of their system of jurisprudence, which was the most carefully constructed one in existence. It was in many respects even superior to our current justice system. Since God is a God of truth, truth was central to Israel’s system of justice.

From the very outset God stressed to Israel how essential it was that all judges be focused on the pursuit of truth. When they were about to enter the Promised Land and be established as a nation, God commanded them:

‘You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the Lord your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you.’ (Deuteronomy 16:18–20)

By the time of Christ, Israel’s judicial system had become well established. Every town with at least 120 men who were heads of households had a local court known as a Sanhedrin. The Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was the final judicial authority in Israel, comparable to the Supreme Court of the United States. It consisted of seventy men from three categories (Mark 14:53): chief priests (mostly Sadducees), elders (religious and secular aristocrats), and scribes (mostly Pharisees).

The law mandated three requirements in a criminal proceeding: a public trial, a defense for the accused, and a

confirmation of guilt by two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; cf. Hebrews 10:28). Because the last point was crucial to a just verdict, the law prescribed a severe penalty for false witnesses—the punishment that the accused would have received if he had been guilty was to be inflicted on the liars:

‘If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who will be in office in those days. The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness and he has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.’ (Deut. 19:16–19)

The rules were particularly strict in capital cases...”

Luke 22:66–71 (NKJV)

⁶⁶ As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying, ⁶⁷ “If You are the Christ, tell us.” But He said to them, “If I tell you, you will by no means believe. ⁶⁸ And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go. ⁶⁹ Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.” ⁷⁰ Then they all said, “Are You then the Son of God?” So He said to them, “You *rightly* say that I am.” ⁷¹ And they said, “What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.”

Going through the motions as if this were a fair and impartial trial they asked Jesus, “**If You are the Christ, tell us.**”

Before giving His answer, Jesus replied, “**If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer.**” Jesus made it clear that the Sanhedrin was not concerned about the evidence, fairness, truth, or justice—but His claim to be the Son of God was the truth.

So He simply reaffirmed His identity by declaring—“**From now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.**”

Psalm 110:1 (NKJV)

¹ The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”

Someone has said—

“Making sure for the record what Jesus was saying, they all said, “**Are You the Son of God, then?**” to which the Lord replied, “**Yes, I am.**” Reprising their roles from the earlier illegal hearing at Caiaphas’s house, they said, “**What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.**”

Mark 15:1 (NKJV)

¹ Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led *Him* away, and delivered *Him* to Pilate.

As the ‘religious’ portion of Jesus’ trial came to an end—the scene now shifts to Pilate’s courtroom and to the civil portion of Jesus’ trial.

This morning we have spent our time looking at the historical narrative of what went on the morning of Jesus’ crucifixion—for the remainder of our time, let’s try to make some practical application to our lives.

For that we need to turn to 1 Peter Chapter 2—and let’s end with something Peter admonished Christians using Jesus’ example of how He handled being treated wrongly the morning of His crucifixion.

1 Peter 2:18-20 (NKJV)

¹⁸ **Servants, *be* submissive to *your* masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.**
¹⁹ **For this *is* commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.**
²⁰ **For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God.**

This is, for most Christians, one of the most difficult things to obey of all that God has commanded.

And yet we need to understand that our light will never shine brighter for the world to see that we are children of God than when we act like Jesus in this regard—

1 Peter 2:22-23 (NKJV)

²² ***"Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";*** ²³ **who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;**

Peter, of course, is reminding us of what the Gospels tell us happened the morning of Jesus' crucifixion.

How that Jesus allowed Himself to be falsely accused by the Jewish leadership; beaten, mocked and scourged by the Roman soldiers and finally crucified—all without offering any defense or opening His mouth to denounce those who were lying about Him and mistreating Him—even to the point of asking the Father to forgive them while He hung on the cross!

And with this fact in mind, Peter then turns to us and says in verse 21—**"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps..."**

As I said, this is one of the most difficult things for us to obey—keeping quiet when we are being falsely accused of some wrongdoing. The reason it's so hard for us is because we've grown up in a country that prides itself on upholding and protecting the rights of its citizens—and because of it, we Americans are very protective of those rights!

So much so that whenever we're pushed around, or our rights are violated in any way—we rise up and say, *"I know my rights! You can't treat me that way. I'll sue, I'll organize a protest...!"*

And then we get saved!

Now God commands us to follow Jesus' example—which goes against everything we're accustomed to—all of the rights we've grown up with and gotten used to as Americans. This is one of those things I have seen over the years that most Christians don't do when wronged—they don't let it go, they don't commit it to God and leave it at that, they tend to retaliate and try to get even!

That's because they're often thinking more like Americans than Christians—primarily because the one is rooted in *pride*, which appeals to our flesh and makes us feel good and empowered when we stand up for our rights—while the other is rooted in *humility* and demands that we die to self which doesn't feel good or empowering at all!

In America today the way most people deal with those who have wronged them is to take them to court and sue—which is why America is the most litigious nation in the world! Understand that this isn't limited to unbelievers—Christians are often no better when it comes to dragging people into court—often suing other believers!

1 Corinthians 6:7, 6 (NKJV)

⁷ Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law [court] against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather *let yourselves* be cheated?

⁶ But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!

I want to make one thing clear—Paul isn't forbidding Christians from using secular courts at all.

Certainly, there are times when Christians are going to need to take unbelievers and secular companies that have wronged them to court—or a Christian or even a Christian church. The issue that Paul is raising is that Christians ought to try as much as possible to handle civil matters between themselves—in the church.

Now this works much better when there is only one Christian church in town, as in Paul's day, and both parties are members of that church. But in Corinth where all these Christians did go to the same church—for the most part, believers were not interested in showing mercy, grace and love to each other in the name of Jesus so as to be a witness to the unbelievers living around them.

No, they were only interested in using the secular courts to get what they felt they were entitled to—it was all about getting their rights!

"So, then what should I do when someone cheats me—just forget it? That's not fair, I have rights!"

When I became a Christian, I gave up my personal rights when I submitted myself to the Lordship of my Master Jesus Christ and became His slave (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

One pastor said,

"Paul is saying here, the minute you go to secular courts nobody wins—the whole church loses. It loses its witness and you lose the opportunity to learn humility by dying to self instead of demanding your rights. Even if you win you've lost because you have placed personal gain above your witness to the world. Why don't you just accept that you've been cheated and leave it at that for the sake of God's glory—He will honor that and take care of you."

For Paul the greater issue wasn't who was right and who was wrong in a civil matter so that proper justice would be administered—

Paul wasn't an attorney he was an apostle—a leader in the Church and as such he was far more concerned that our witness as Christians to the world be maintained—demonstrating the sacrificial love and the character of Jesus more than anything else.

Today so many Christians are so consumed with their rights—that it seems nothing else matters to them. So, they sue those who have wronged them—even fellow Christians—and all of it taking place before unbelievers!

In the eyes of God my witness and His glory are far more important than any personal compensation I can get from suing another Christian.

About twenty or so years ago, I was cheated out of an inheritance by some family members who claimed to be Christians.

I was hurt and upset, and I thought about suing them—but God kept me from going thru with it.

And I'm glad He did because I have come to realize that my witness is far more important to me than the money—I forgave them, and God took care of us.

1 Peter 2:21 (NKJV)

²¹ For to this *you* were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps...

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

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