

Survey of Biblical History – Part 1: Creation to Christ

#20 - THE PASSION WEEK, PART 2: PASSOVER, ARREST & TRIALS

Wednesday - Judas and the Plot to Arrest Jesus (Matt. 26:1-5, 14-16; Luke 22:3-6)

When Jesus had arrived in Bethany Saturday night, Mary the sister of Lazarus anointed Jesus with a costly vial of perfume. Judas was incensed at what he regarded as a waste of money. The fact is, Judas had managed to be appointed as the treasurer for the band of Jesus' disciples and had been secretly pilfering money from their collections. His greed and avarice was challenged and it was clear to him that his profitable thievery was drying up. Furthermore, it seems he had had enough of Jesus and saw a way to make a small profit by plotting with the Sanhedrin to have Jesus arrested, tried, and executed. On Wednesday, Judas arranged a secret meeting with the Jewish authorities who agreed to pay him 30 pieces of silver (a pittance) to betray Jesus into their hands. From that moment Judas looked for an opportune time to perform this act of treachery, preferably when the crowds had dispersed. The authorities simply waited for his signal to make their move.

Thursday - Passover Celebrated by the Disciples (Matt. 26:17-46; Luke 22:1-23, 39-46)

The disciples secured the place within Jerusalem where they would celebrate the Passover with Jesus. Galileans were known to celebrate Passover a day before the Judeans. Most likely, many festival pilgrims and Judeans celebrated the Passover on Friday while Jesus and his disciples celebrated it on Thursday. When evening came, the disciples gathered together in what is called "the Upper Room" to enjoy the feast. Jesus used the occasion to introduce the practice of the Lord's Supper, a sign reminding the newly established Church that Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant by the sacrifice of His body and the shedding of His blood. The symbol was soon to be manifested by the reality. It is no mistake that Passover was chosen as the precise moment in history God planned to make redemption a reality (see Gal. 4:4-5). The Passover celebration typified Christ as the sacrifice that covered God's people as His judgment passes over them and is directed toward the paschal lamb. "*For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed*" (1 Cor. 5:7). Jesus sends Judas away, knowing he will gather the authorities for His arrest. Meanwhile, He and the disciples leave the city and head for the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus prays in preparation for the coming ordeal. Jesus at this point began to experience the first pangs of suffering He was to endure over the course of the next 18+ hours (see Matt. 26:38-39). As He wrestled in prayer a rare condition known as hematidrosis affected Him in which the capillaries below the skin burst within the sweat glands creating a bloody sweat that is secreted. This is caused by extreme mental and physiological stress.

Friday - Betrayal and Arrest (Matt. 26:47-56; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:1-11)

Judas knew the place in the Garden well since Jesus and the disciples retired there often for the peace and solitude it offered. It became a place where Jesus liked to pray. No one else would know this place and so it was a perfect location to make the arrest without public fanfare. Judas led a host of officials and soldiers to the place later in the evening when Thursday had already transferred to Friday (i.e. at sundown). Among those that arrived was a cohort of Roman soldiers (i.e. normally 600 men, but probably considerably less on this occasion) along with Jewish officers that came from the temple police, members of the Sanhedrin, and several Chief Priests. Judas signified to the soldiers who they were to arrest by kissing Jesus. When Jesus inquired of whom they seek He answered back, "I AM." The supernatural force of these words caused the arresting party to fall backwards. This was an ominous sign of the divine power they would soon witness. Jesus does not resist being bound and arrested. He is fully prepared to die.

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Friday - The Trials of Jesus

1. **The First Jewish Trial before Annas** (John 18:13-24)

Upon arrest Jesus is ushered before Annas, appointed by Romans to the High Priesthood from AD 6 to AD 15. Although no longer High Priest, he was highly regarded and continued to exert influence on the office long after he was retired. 5 of his sons held the office in addition to Caiaphas, his son-in-law and current office holder. Furthermore, the Jews believed that once appointed a High Priest the office was for life. Annas conducted a preliminary investigation of the charges brought against Jesus. This hearing took place in the early morning hours. Jesus deferred to those who had publicly witnessed his ministry and teaching and questioned the propriety of the investigation. A temple policeman struck a blow to Jesus for what he perceived to be disrespect for the High Priest. Annas had Jesus bound and sent to Caiaphas.

2. **The Second Jewish Trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin** (Matt. 26:57-68)

Caiaphas was High Priest from AD 18-36. He had unwittingly predicted the death of Jesus and was a shrewd politician. As leader of the Sanhedrin, he conducted the official investigation into Jesus' crimes. The Council knew their case was weak, so they conjured up false witnesses (via bribery?) to testify against Jesus. However, the testimonies were inconsistent and proved nothing. Eventually they managed to extract a confession from the otherwise silent Jesus. He made an explicit claim to deity. No further testimony was needed. Jesus' blasphemous confession secured his guilt. This prompted a disgraceful display of brutality as Jesus was blind-folded, mocked and taunt Him while others beat Him with their fists and slapped his face.

3. **The Third Jewish Trial before the Sanhedrin** (Matt. 27:1; Luke 22:66-71)

The initial trials took place in the night and were illegal by Jewish law. The Sanhedrin needed to wait until dawn to make any official pronouncement of Jesus' guilt. After a few hours of sleep, they reconvened at dawn (6 am) to replay the trial and officially sentence Jesus to death.

4. **The First Roman Trial before Pilate** (Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38)

The Jews had no authority to carry out a death sentence; therefore, Jesus needed to be tried before the Roman authorities. He was taken to Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea. The fate of Jesus rested with Pilate's ratification of the death sentence pronounced by the Sanhedrin. The Jews' argument before Pilate was that Jesus was mounting an insurrection against Caesar and the power of Rome, claiming rightful authority over the Jewish people (i.e. claiming to be king of the Jews). Pilate saw no substance to the charges and wanted to dismiss the case.

5. **The Second Roman Trial before Herod** (Luke 23:6-12)

Pilate thought he saw a way out of this political difficulty once he learned Jesus was a Galilean and belonged to the district of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee. Since Herod happened to be in Jerusalem at that very moment, Pilate sent Jesus his way. Herod questioned Jesus to no avail. Meanwhile, Jewish authorities, trying to take matters more seriously, vehemently accused Jesus also to no avail. Herod's soldiers mocked and beat Jesus and then sent him back to Pilate

6. **The Third Roman Trial before Pilate** (Matt. 27:15-26; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-19:16)

Pilate summoned the Jewish leaders to dismiss the case. He agreed to punish Jesus and then release him. There were 3 forms of punishment with a whip in Roman jurisprudence. *Fustigato* was a light beating that served as a warning for minor offenses—what Pilate initially had done to Jesus. *Flagellatio* was a flogging for more serious crimes. *Verreratio* was a brutal flogging associated with crucifixion in capital crimes. Once Pilate authorized crucifixion, Jesus then received this latter punishment. In hopes of dismissing the case, Pilate employed the tradition of releasing a prisoner at certain feast times as a gesture of mercy. The Jewish authorities had worked the crowds into a frenzy, crying for Jesus' crucifixion over Barrabas. They questioned Pilate's honor and loyalty to Caesar, giving him no choice but to bow to their demands.