

JESUS' BETRAYAL AND PERJURED TRIAL

BIBLE TEXT : Matthew 26:47-68; 27:1, 2, 11-26

LESSON 63 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Matthew 26:47-68

⁴⁷ And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

⁴⁸ Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

⁴⁹ And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

⁵⁰ And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

⁵¹ And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out *his* hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

⁵² Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

⁵³ Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

⁵⁴ But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

⁵⁵ In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

⁵⁶ But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

⁵⁷ And they that had laid hold on Jesus led *him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

⁵⁸ But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

⁵⁹ Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

⁶⁰ But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, *yet* found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

⁶¹ And said, This *fellow* said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Jesus Taken Prisoner

Christ's spiritual battle had been won on His knees in prayer to the Father, such prayer that He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. But now He rose and calmly went with His disciples to meet the foe. He told the disciples that the betrayer was near; and before He finished speaking, a mob of Roman soldiers and wicked scribes and Pharisees appeared, armed with swords and sticks. Judas was at the head of the mob and ran forward to kiss Jesus. One would have thought he would be so ashamed of his cowardly act that he would not have wanted any of the disciples to see him, but this was part of the bargain he had made with the high priests.

Jesus had always been kind and gentle among the people. He had always gone about doing good. But now His enemies came in the dark to take Him prisoner, as though He were a desperate criminal. Jesus did not fight back; but there was something difficult about taking Him. Once the high priests had sent men to arrest Jesus, and when they came back without Him their only excuse was, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7: 46). The words of His mouth had driven back His would-be captors. Even now in the garden when there was a great crowd of wicked men, they drew back and fell to the ground when Jesus told them He was the One they were looking for. He was more than man: He was the Son of God, and had all power in Heaven and earth if He wanted to use it. He did not have to let these evil men bind Him. God could have sent twelve legions of angels (which was 70,000 or more) any one of whom would have been able to destroy all Christ's enemies at a touch. But that was not the will of God. The Savior's "hour was come," and He was about to be slain as the Paschal Lamb.

Man's Weakness without God

Compare the angels that Jesus could have called, with Peter's little sword. All Peter could do was cut off a servant's ear. That is how weak we are in comparison with the strength of our God. However, if it had been the will of God for the disciples to defend their Master, one man could have done a great deal. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31); and "One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you" (Joshua 23:10). The great multitude of soldiers with their swords and staves would have been helpless if it had been the will of God for Christ to escape.

Jesus let the soldiers lead Him away to the judgment hall; and all His disciples forsook Him. Jesus, Who made the greatest sacrifice possible — He gave His life for His enemies — did not seem to have one friend in His hour of greatest need. Don't we love the Savior for the price He paid?

False Witnesses

First, Jesus was taken to the home of the high priest. Witnesses were called to testify against Jesus, but none could be found, because He had never done anything wrong. Finally two false witnesses took the stand, but they did not even agree on the lie they told. Their testimony should not have been counted, but the Jews were so angry they pretended it was lawful. One of the witnesses

⁶² And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what *is it which* these witness against thee?

⁶³ But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

⁶⁴ Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

⁶⁵ Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

⁶⁶ What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.

⁶⁷ Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote *him* with the palms of their hands,

⁶⁸ Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?

Matthew 27:1-2

¹ When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:

² And when they had bound him, they led *him* away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

Matthew 27:11-26

¹¹ And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.

¹² And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

¹³ Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?

¹⁴ And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

¹⁵ Now at *that* feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.

¹⁶ And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.

¹⁷ Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

¹⁸ For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.

¹⁹ When he was set down on the

stated that Jesus had 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). But that was not what Jesus had said. His words were, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). He was talking about His own body, saying that someone else would destroy it, but He Himself would be able to raise it again. He said nothing about a building.

Next, the High Priest asked Jesus to testify against Himself. That, too, was against the rules of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish governing body. Even if a man pled guilty, his witness against himself was not to be accepted. He could only be condemned on the honest testimony of two other witnesses who agreed.

The people spat in Jesus' face; they struck Him; and they spoke to Him with great disrespect. All this was against the Jewish rules. Every prisoner was supposed to be considered innocent until he was proved guilty; but the anger of these people caused them to forget all their rules of conduct.

The priest was so angry with Christ's confession that he tore his clothes, and demanded that Jesus should die. Of course, that had been decided among the Jews before the trial ever started. The trial was merely an outward show to satisfy those who might question such a hasty execution.

Peter's Denial

Where was Peter while the Savior was suffering this humiliation? He had followed at a distance to see what would happen, and was in a dangerous position. First, he had failed to watch and pray, and then he had followed Jesus afar off. Those are two steps that we all must guard against. As we neglect prayer and the reading of God's Word — communion with our Lord — a greater space comes between us and the Savior; and if we continue in that way we shall eventually deny the One Who ransomed our souls.

When temptation came to Peter he did not have power to stand. Just a servant girl accused him of being a follower of Jesus, and he denied it. This was Peter who had made the boast that he would die for Jesus. How helpless we are in our own strength! Soon others also recognized Peter, and he denied that he had ever known Jesus. Finally he became so angry he cursed.

A Rooster's Crow

Suddenly, perhaps louder than thunder to Peter, a rooster crowed. Why did that startle him? Because Jesus had warned that before the cock crowd Peter would have denied Him three times. Jesus also heard the rooster crow, and turned His sad eyes toward His zealous but weak disciple. Oh, what remorse smote Peter! He realized that the Lord had been right in all His accusations against him; and he went out and wept bitterly.

But there was hope for Peter. He repented. It is not the greatness of their *sins* that will bar the sinners from Heaven, but it is their refusal to repent. Peter repented and was converted and eventually became a pillar in the church, and strengthened the other disciples. On the day of Pentecost, after receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost, he preached such a marvelous sermon that three thousand people were saved in one day. After many years of faithful service, he suffered martyrdom for the Christ he had once denied.

Trial Cut Short

The trial thus far had gone on in the house of Caiaphas, and early in the morning a verdict was agreed upon that Jesus was worthy of death. By the Jewish law such trials should have continued for three days: a verdict was to be reached the first day; the second day was for reconsideration, and as little as possible should be done by the judges that would take their minds from the case; and on the third day they were to meet and again cast their votes. If a judge had voted against the defendant, he could change his decision; but if he had voted "not guilty" the first time, he could

judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

²⁰ But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

²¹ The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

²² Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?

They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

²³ And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

²⁴ When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye *to it*.

²⁵ Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children.

²⁶ Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *him* to be crucified.

not change. Thus every opportunity was given a man to be acquitted. But the trial of Jesus was not like that; it was hurried through in a few hours in the night.

No Fault in Jesus

The Jews were under the Roman government, and any cases that involved the death sentence must be referred to the Romans for trial. So, early in the morning, the angry mob took their Prisoner to the judgment hall of Pilate. After Pilate had talked with Jesus a little while he said, "I find no fault in this man." The Jews did not like that. They wanted Pilate to condemn Him to death at their word, without a fair hearing. Could not Pilate trust their word?

Christ before Herod

When Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee, he thought he could avoid making a decision by sending Him to Herod, who was the Roman governor of that part of the country. Herod was glad to see Jesus because he had heard of His miracles, and hoped he might see some supernatural act. But the Lord does not work His miracles to satisfy the curious. When Jesus remained quiet at Herod's accusations, the soldiers ridiculed Him, placing a gorgeous robe upon Him, and pretending homage to Him, Herod did not wish to make a decision, so Jesus was taken back to Pilate.

Jesus or Barabbas?

In the meantime Pilate's wife had had a bad dream, and she was afraid if Pilate condemned Jesus to death, great trouble would come upon them. Pilate was afraid, too, and he remembered that it was the custom to release a Jewish prisoner each year at the Passover. Perhaps he chose the worst man he could think of a murderer who had terrorized the people; and he gave the Jews their choice of this desperado or Jesus. He thought surely they would prefer Jesus, but they shouted, Not this, man, but Barabbas." Pilate thought their sympathy might be aroused if he had Jesus scourged; 'and he could then release Him, but they only cried, "Crucify him." (It was also against their laws to scourge a man before sentence had been passed.)

Pilate was convinced that Jesus was a just man, but he did not have the courage to stand for what he knew was right. He feared the people. He stood before them and washed his hands to try to excuse himself for the cowardly deed he was committing, but his guilt before God could not be washed away.

The Suffering of the Jews

The Jews said His blood be on us, and on our children." If they could only have known what they were saying! Not long after Jesus died, Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Jews suffered horrible privations. According to the historian Josephus, 1,100,000 of them were killed and 97,000 were taken captive. That was only the beginning of their sorrows. They are still suffering today because they failed to recognize their Messiah when He came, and condemned Him to the cruel and shameful death of the cross. When Jesus comes again, the Jews will know Him, and will mourn for Him "whom they have pierced" (Zechariah 12:10).

QUESTIONS

- 1 Who betrayed Jesus? For how much?
- 2 Where did the mob find Jesus? What time of the day?
- 3 What happened to Jesus' disciples when He became a prisoner?
- 4 Did Jesus have a fair trial?
- 5 What was the verdict and the sentence?