

EASTER 2021 – PART B

In last week's message we concluded by looking at the indescribable agony that Jesus was facing in the Garden of Gethsemane. It appears that with all that He was wrestling with in His heart and mind that He almost died of a stroke or heart attack because of the stress. He was sweating drops of blood. He fully understood that in a very short time that He would be experiencing His Father's cup of divine wrath being poured out on Him. No one has any comprehension of what that means or how it was even accomplished. In a way unknown to us, however, obviously Jesus understood something of what that meant for Him both physically and spiritually. No matter what was taking place in the Garden with all of its stress, what we know is that Jesus triumphed over it. He finishes praying and says in [Mark 14:42](#),

Mk 14:42 (NKJV) Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."

The drama is now in full motion. [Mark 14:43-46](#) describes what was happening as Jesus was speaking,

Mk 14:43 (NKJV) And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ⁴⁴ Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely." ⁴⁵ As soon as He had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, "Rabbi, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. ⁴⁶ Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him.

This is no small crowd, and to make it worse, it is really very late in the evening. The disciples were so tired that they could not even stay awake to pray. Here Jesus was on the slope of the Mount of Olives and as He looks up He sees a “**great multitude with swords and clubs**” marching towards Him. It is estimated that there were probably about 1000 people who were in this “**great multitude**”. There were the Jewish leaders called the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees, a few Sadducees, some scribes, the temple police, a regiment (*speiran*, Gk.) of Roman soldiers (600 men to be exact), and some onlookers who were curious about this large crowd moving through the street so late in the evening. What amazes me the most about this crowd was that the Pharisees and Sadducees were there together. The Sadducees were the liberals and did not believe in the afterlife or angels. The Pharisees did and were more conservative. However, at this moment, they were more than willing to drop all of their differences and just come together to put Jesus to death. I think that Joseph of Arimathea probably did not consent to what they were doing, and maybe even Nicodemus who came to Jesus at night in [John 3](#).

Everyone that was there, though, they wanted Jesus dead. They hated Him. They hated what He said about them in [Matthew 23](#) when He pronounced His woes against them. They hated that He could do miracles and all they could do was complain about Him doing miracles. They were jealous of how the people responded to Him. They hated His teaching, His messages. They hated everything about Him, and being dead was the best thing they thought that could happen to Him. This was their hour and they were not going to lose it. He had destroyed their week with all the praise lavished on Him as He rode into Jerusalem. They hated how He had cleansed the temple on Tuesday. Why was that? It was because everyone knew the money-changers controlled by Annas were thieves and gouged the people. No wonder the people liked Jesus so much. He exposed these wicked men. He had come back to the temple on Wednesday and taught the truth of God to them all day. So, concerning all of this, [John 18:4](#) makes a very revealing statement about Jesus when it says,

Jn 18:4 (NKJV) Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?"

Jesus knew exactly what was about to happen to Him. Trust me, but He was never afraid. He understood their hostility, their vehement hatred, and their determined resolve to kill Him as soon as possible. He knew what He would be going through with the kangaroo trial, with the beating, the plucking of the beard, with the being blindfolded and beaten in the face, with being spit upon and mocked, with the 40 lashes to the back – He knew everything that was before Him. Jesus knew all of these things because He knew the Scriptures, and all of these actions had been prophesied.

One of the questions that always comes to my mind is how did they actually know where Jesus was? This is the Passover with nearly 2-3 million Jews assembled for it. It was more than difficult to just know where someone might be in a large city or the surrounding fields with so many people, **but then there was Judas**. Please appreciate that Jesus and the disciples had been to the Garden of Gethsemane many times in the past. It was one of their favorite spots. [John 18:2](#) says,

Jn 18:2 (NKJV) And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples.

I want you to just imagine the scene. Jesus is exhausted from the ordeal in the garden. He is physically, mentally, and spiritually drained. His emotions are as filled with dread and apprehension as could be imagined simply because the humanness of the God-Man was on display. His clothes have soaked up the blood He was sweating, and it is obvious that this was not your normal prayer meeting on a late Thursday evening. Peter was so indignant with what was happening and actually cuts off someone's ear. That is not a good start for Jesus being delivered into the hands of wicked, wicked men – many who were carrying swords and clubs. The Romans carried the swords and the temple police the clubs because they were not allowed to use lethal weapons like a sword. No matter what happened, they were surely going to make this arrest. This was the hour of darkness.

Jesus is amazing. In [John 18:4](#) that we just read, Jesus says “**Whom are you seeking?**”, to which they replied in [John 18:5](#) – “**Jesus of Nazareth**”. Now notice what takes place. In v5, Jesus simply replies “**I am He**”. [John 18:6](#) says,

Jn 18:6 (NKJV) Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.

Two words – “**I am**”, and nearly 1000 people fall flat to the ground. Actually, I almost have to laugh. This is thrilling, this is exhilarating. Do you remember what Jesus said in [John 10:17-18](#),

Jn 10:17 (NKJV) Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.
¹⁸ No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.

These people have no idea Who they are dealing with in the garden – and I think neither did His disciples, for as this proceeds, they all flee in fear. They watched a great multitude of hostile people just fall to the ground with two words, and yet the disciples remained afraid for their lives. They know they are no match for a mob of 1000 people, many with swords and clubs, who had no idea what they were really doing – so they fled. 11 vs. 1000 was not good odds for them. That is about 1 against 100.

Now, I want to draw your attention to a monumental picture of Christ given to us in [Hebrews 5:7](#). This is a passage that is talking about the high priestly ministry of Christ and it says,

Heb 5:7 (NKJV) who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,

Many believe, myself included, that this verse is a revealing picture of what took place in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was in such spiritual and mental agony at that moment that He was praying with very loud cries to God the Father and with tears of great anguish for what was before Him. What v7 tells us, though, is that He was praying to the One who Jesus knew would “**save Him from death**”. I believe that John MacArthur has rightly divided this in His understanding of the verse when he says that Jesus knew by faith that God the Father would save Him from death by the resurrection. From where did that faith come? It came from the Scriptures, and specifically [Psalm 16:10](#) which declares,

Ps 16:10 (NKJV) For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

Let me reinforce what I am saying in a different way, in a practical way. I am not sure what may be ahead of any of us in the future, but what I am sure of is that whatever it is, there is a Word from God that will be your strength, and the more of the Scriptures that you know, the greater will be your faith and your willingness to allow God to have His way in your life during that time. What God the Father was asking of Jesus was more than any of us can even imagine or appreciate, but the heart and mind of Jesus was anchored in the Word of God, and in His darkest hour He knew that the Father would not allow Him to see corruption. He knew that after He died that He would be resurrected.

All of this happens so quickly. It is early Friday morning, and by 3pm that Friday afternoon, Jesus will be dead. When we capture a criminal and put him in jail, just the appeals process may take up to seven years. This is quick though. Jesus is arrested, He endures two trials with absolutely no evidence of a crime committed brought against Him. Then He is led out to Golgotha and nailed to a cross. This is quick. Here is the point. God is in control of everything that is happening. Some of these events have been prophesied for nearly 1500 years. I think about Judas and how the Scriptures say that Satan entered him. Satan got Judas to do exactly what he wanted him to do, then he let him hang himself and fall on the rocks and his guts were burst out of his body. The devil has no remorse in how he uses people and how he deceives them and in how he finally gets them into hell. Notice what Judas said in [Mark 14:44](#). This is the epitome and height of utter hypocrisy.

Mk 14:44 (NKJV) Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely."

Seize Him and lead Him away safely? Are you kidding me? Judas knew exactly what they would do with Jesus. When you kissed someone on the cheek, it was a sign of friendship, of love, of respect, but this particular Greek verb for “**kiss**” means to kiss fervently. Judas was really putting on a show. I wonder how Jesus felt? Have you ever been betrayed by someone you really loved and cared about and into whom you have invested your life? It hurts. It is more than painful. I am sure that even though Jesus knew full well what was going to happen that it still did not remove the pain and sorrow of it being

done by someone in whom He had invested three years of His life with truth, grace, and love. That makes it harder – much harder. Please appreciate that Judas was there for the two trials, the flogging, the blindfolding, the beating, and the final condemning of Jesus to death. It appears that after Satan had used him that he left him, and as Judas watched to horrific beating, the scourging, and the unjust treatment, it seems that his conscience just got the best of him. He became remorseful and regretful of what he had done, so he went and committed suicide. When he gave the money back to the Sanhedrin, they simply bought the Potter's Field with the money so that Judas could be buried there. Did the Sanhedrin care about Judas? No, not one ounce. Did Satan care about Judas? Are you kidding? Did Jesus care about Judas? You bet He did. I am sure that at some time during the five hours of trials that the eyes of Jesus and Judas met. Can you imagine what Judas must have been thinking?

Now, someone is going to ask at this point whether Judas was saved and actually repented? I do not believe the Scriptures will allow for that conclusion. He hanged himself out of remorse, not repentance. Judas has to be one of the saddest figures in the Scriptures – maybe the very saddest of all. 24/7 for three years with the Son of God, and he hangs himself. If you ever need an example of someone who literally wasted their life away for nothing, Judas is your man.

Okay. We are now set for the trials of Jesus. John MacArthur has provided some great information about the actual trials and all of the rules and regulations that were in place to protect the accused. What we know is that the legal system in Israel was well defined and it actually worked. It had been established in Deuteronomy and had functioned for centuries. At the time of Christ, the system was working so well that there were no lawless areas in the country. There may have been a few uprisings, but nothing major. We know that if a trial was required that it had to be a very public trial. There had to be both a prosecuting attorney and a defense attorney, and there had to be a judge. There had to be a minimum of 2-3 witnesses without which there could not be a trial. A trial could not be performed at night. If you started in the day, the trial had to be postponed until the next day before nighttime came. During the trial, the judges had to fast as evidence of how seriously they were taking their responsibility. You could not have a trial on a feast day or on the Passover.

If anyone lied in court, it was as much perjury then as it is today and had very serious consequences for the person that was lying. The way the system worked was that if you as a witness gave false testimony, then the penalty for the crime of the accused would be your punishment. If you falsely testified against someone who was accused of murder, then you would get the death penalty as a false witness. To make the trial of Christ even more illegal, if the death sentence was reached in a case, then there had to be a minimum of at least 24 hours before the execution could take place. Normally, the execution was carried out by stoning and the witnesses had to be the first to throw the stones. Based on all of these criteria, it should be clear how illegal the trial of Jesus actually was. We could call this "illegal" justice, an oxymoron – and this was just the Jewish trial. There was still a Gentile trial, which without all of the details of its requirements, was as much of a miscarriage of justice as was the Jewish trial. Jesus was sent to Pilate who sent Him to Herod who sent Him back to Pilate who found Him not guilty, but sentenced Him to death and released a murderer. This is really unexplainable insanity.

All of these trials (six altogether) took place in about five hours. You need to remember that Jesus was actually crucified and nailed to the cross at around 9am on Friday morning, He was judged by God for three hours between noon and 3pm, and He died around 3pm Friday afternoon when the Passover lambs

were being slain. So if we work backwards, it probably took at least 1-2 hours to get him to Golgotha with his cross, 5 hours for his trial to include his beating, which means that he was probably arrested between 1-2am on Friday morning.

The obvious problem with all of this is that there was no real trial. If you are going to have a trial, then you have to at least have a crime. What would that be - healing the lame, the lepers, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, feeding the 5000, walking on water, raising the dead? If there is no crime, then actually there can be no witnesses – right? Then to make it worse, the Sanhedrin could not actually bring charges against someone – not Annas, not Caiaphas. All they could do was to have a trial once the charges were validated. Today, we would say that you have to have an indictment before you can actually have a trial. In Jesus's case, there were no charges. Once again, what would they be – first degree raising someone from the dead?

You have to understand who Annas was because that is where they first took Jesus for the trials. Annas was the power behind the scenes. Everything that went on in the temple with the money-changers was called the “bazaars of Annas”. You can imagine why he did not like Jesus, but he was the one who was supposed to come up with an illegal indictment so they could have a trial. He had been the high priest for 5-6 years, and after he stepped down, all of his sons and his son-in-law Caiaphas had been the high priests. He was like the god-father of the corruption in the temple, a kind of religious mafia boss if you will. As you can imagine, he was very, very rich, and certainly he did not like Jesus turning all of the tables over and running the money-changers out of the temple. That was where he stole everyone's money. This is like asking the fox to guard the chicken house. What all of these wicked men had done was that they had determined the sentence of death before they had even identified a crime. The problem with the witnesses that they had bribed was that the trials were taking place so fast in the middle of the night that no one had any time to corroborate with each other on what they said, so their testimonies never matched. Besides this was going on between 2-7am, and everyone was tired and sleepy.

So, what actually pulled the trigger in these illegal trials. It is simple. They had no evidence, they had no legitimate charges, they did not have a crime, they had only false witnesses, and they had no indictment. What are they going to say – we saw Him heal someone on the Sabbath? The two sentences that Jesus uttered to them that gave them their false justification to kill Him is found in [Mark 14:60-65](#), and specifically [v62](#).

Mk 14:60 (NKJV) And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, "Do You answer nothing? What *is it* these men testify against You?" ⁶¹ But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" ⁶² Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." ⁶³ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? ⁶⁴ You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. ⁶⁵ Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.

You have to remember that for all practical purposes that Jesus kept silent in all of these trials with Annas, Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate until this point. The question that they asked was not “what did you

do”, but “who are you?” to which Jesus told them the truth. This was not new to anyone. Jesus had been saying that He was the Son of God ever since He began His ministry, and in His truthful answer He knew full well what would be the result. Nothing could prevent Him from doing His Father’s will – nothing and no one. The blasphemers now accuse Jesus of blasphemy and they take Him to Pilate and accuse Him of forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar. [Luke 23:1-2](#) says,

Lk 23:1 (NKJV) Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. ² And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

The trials are now over and Pilate gives them his reluctant permission to have Him crucified. The mockery is complete with one final step – death on a cross. In closing out the message, all I want to do is to read [Mark 15:14-38](#) and we will address the details in our next message.

Mk 15:14 (NKJV) Then Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, "Crucify Him!" ¹⁵ So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged *Him*, to be crucified. ¹⁶ Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. ¹⁷ And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His *head*, ¹⁸ and began to salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹ Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. ²¹ Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. ²² And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. ²³ Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take *it*. ²⁴ And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. ²⁵ Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. ²⁶ And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁷ With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. ²⁸ So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "*And He was numbered with the transgressors.*" ²⁹ And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! *You* who destroy the temple and build *it* in three days, ³⁰ save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" ³¹ Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him. ³³ Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" ³⁵ Some of those who stood by, when they heard *that*, said, "Look, He is calling for Elijah!" ³⁶ Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put *it* on a reed, and offered *it* to Him to drink, saying, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down." ³⁷ And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. ³⁸ Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

This is why we take the Lord's Supper – to remember what Jesus did when He sacrificed His life for ours. What a Savior. Next week we will conclude by looking at what happened here on Golgotha and what happened on Sunday morning when Jesus arose triumphant over death and the grave. This is the most amazing story ever told.