Tale of Two Trials (The Jewish Trial)
John 18:12-14, 19-24

An Overview

Hebrew Law

Deceitful Hearts
An Overview

- **The arrest** – probably Wed., April 5, 30 AD
- **The Jewish trial** – this had three phases
  - **Phase One** – A preliminary hearing at night before Annas in which Jesus remains silent
    - Confusion because of reference to two High Priests
    - Jewish High Priest was a lifetime appointment.
    - Annas was this High Priest.
    - However, Romans would appoint one of their own liking if the current Jewish High Priest was not.
    - Caiaphas was the Roman appointee.
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An Overview

- **Phase Two** – Jesus before Caiaphas
  - This is the trial recorded by the Synoptic Gospels.
  - Various witnesses were brought forward.
  - None seemed to be able to agree on the events.
  - Witnesses were dismissed.
  - Acquittal was on the horizon.
  - Caiaphas intervenes illegally and asks “the question” – Matthew 26:63.
Matthew 26:57-68 (NASB)

57 Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together.

58 But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome.

59 Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death.

60 They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. later on two came forward,
and said, “This man stated, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.’”

The high priest stood up and said to Him, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?”

But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.”

Jesus *said to him, “You have said it * yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.”
Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?” They answered, “He deserves death!”

Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, and said, “Prophesy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?”
Matthew 26:63 (NASB)

63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.”
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  - Witnesses were dismissed.
  - Acquittal was on the horizon.
  - Caiaphas intervenes illegally and asks “the question” – Matthew 26:63.
  - Jesus does not have to answer the question.
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An Overview

- **Phase Three** – the following morning at daybreak – Matthew 27:1
Matthew 27:1 (NASB)

1 Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death;
Phase Three – the following morning at daybreak – Matthew 27:1

- The questioning of the previous night was reiterated formally.
- A judgment was secured.
- This phase involved the entire Sanhedrin.
- This was the highest court in the Jewish land.
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An Overview

- **The Roman Trial** – necessary to execute
  - A prearranged appearance before Pilate
    - Looking for a *pro forma* trial and judgment
    - Pilate tries to free the prisoner.
  - Jesus was sent to Herod by Pilate to escape responsibility.
  - Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate to escape responsibility – trial recorded by the Synoptics.

- **The final feature** – *the crucifixion*
Hebrew Law

- The basics of Hebrew law and legal practice
  - Hebrew law has a double base: the Mosiac Law (Pentateuch) and the Talmud (oral) Law.
  - The Talmud is of great volume with two parts.
    - Mishnah – the basic law
    - Gemara – what we would call a commentary
  - There are two Talmuds: the Jerusalem version (first written in fourth century) and Babylonian version (written in the fifth century and 4x longer).
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Hebrew Law

➢ The court in capital cases
  ❖ Only court authorized was the Sanhedrin.
  ❖ Founded in wilderness under Moses – Numbers 11:16-17
Numbers 11:16-17 (NASB)

16 The LORD therefore said to Moses, “Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you.

17 Then I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit who is upon you, and will put Him upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you will not bear it all alone.
The court in capital cases

- Only court authorized was the Sanhedrin.
- Founded in wilderness under Moses – Numbers 11:16-17
- Seventy to help Moses, plus Moses = 71
- Three chambers: 23 priests (religious), 23 scribes (legal), 23 elders (democratic), and 2 presiding officers
- Jesus refers to this in Matthew 16:21.

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Hebrew Law
Matthew 16:21 (NASB)

21 From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.
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Hebrew Law

- Qualifications of judges
  - A Hebrew of Hebrews
  - Learned in the Law and prior legal experience
  - A linguist – interpreters were not allowed in the courtroom
  - Could not sit if there were any personal interests
  - Humble and of good repute
Tale of Two Trials (The Jewish Trial)

John 18:12-14, 19-24

Hebrew Law

- Witnesses – very different than our system
  - Jewish witnesses were considerably more important.
  - In Hebrew law, the testimony of the witness had to be complete.
  - Testimony had to pertain to the whole of the crime of the accused.
  - All witnesses had to agree.
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Hebrew Law

- Witnesses – very different than our system – cont.
  - There had to be two or more agreeing witnesses on each particular in order to convict.
    - **Hakiroth** – about time and place with seven prescribed questions
    - **Bedikoth** – somewhat like a cross examination
    - Example – Apocryphal book “Susanna”
Tale of Two Trials (The Jewish Trial)

John 18:12-14, 19-24

Hebrew Law

- Witnesses – very different than our system – cont.
  - Witnesses must be the accusers – therefore no prosecutors or state lawyers.
  - Witnesses must arrange the arrest of the accused and then present the accusation before the nation’s judges.
  - Witnesses had to warn the accused ahead of the crime. This was to: (1) protect the potential offender against his own ignorance and rashness, (2) aid in establishing criminal intent, and (3) assist judges in determining the proper penalty.
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Hebrew Law

- Mode of trial
  - The trial was to be conducted between the morning sacrifice and the evening sacrifice.
  - Judges were to always seek to defend the accused for acquittal.
  - Accused had to be convicted by a majority of two – that means a minimum of 37.
  - A unanimous vote of guilty was considered invalid because it would be emotional.
  - Guilty vote and sentence could not be presented on the same day.
Deceitful Hearts

- Jesus was convicted under a very precise and advanced judicial system.
- Perhaps the best in the world at preventing the death penalty.
- The Righteous One was condemned to death by the most merciful and careful system of judicial processes known to man – Jeremiah 17:9.

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Jeremiah 17:9 (NASB)

9 “The heart is more deceitful than all else
And is desperately sick;
Who can understand it?
Deceitful Hearts

- This happened because of desperate men with despicably deceitful and wicked hearts.
- But Jesus was in control of all that was to occur.
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Application

Can anything cure this sickness?

The innocent one (Jesus) died for the guilty ones (us) in order to redeem us and reconcile us to God.

Do you know that personally?

Does your life in Christ reflect that cost?