

## Captured and Convicted

Matthew 26:47-68

May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Big idea: Jesus is captured through betrayal and convicted through injustice.

Intro –

Mock trial experience – the judge commenting that people have an intuitive sense of the seriousness of the room and of the importance of justice. The room communicates that with its wood paneling and imposing judge's bench.

The Jewish trial system that Jesus would experience was intended and designed to show impartial justice and lean towards mercy.

God had established this in Deuteronomy

**Deuteronomy 16:18-20** "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. <sup>19</sup> "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. <sup>20</sup> "Justice, *and only* justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

(Summarized from John MacArthur) - Any community with at least 120 men who were heads of families could form a local council. After the Babylonian exile, that council often was composed of the synagogue leadership. The council came to be known as a Sanhedrin, from a Greek term transliterated into English. Literally means "sitting together." Local Sanhedrin composed of up to 23 members, and the great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was composed of 70 chief priests, elders, and scribes, with the high priest making a total of 71. Odd number maintained to eliminate the possibility of a tie vote.

Our judicial system in the west owes much to this judeo-Christian background.

They were to have a public trial, defense counsel, and conviction only on the testimony of at least two reliable witnesses. Trials were therefore always open to public scrutiny and the defendant had the right to bring forth evidence and witnesses in his own behalf. (mac)

Rabbinical law required that a sentence of death could not be carried out until the third day after it was rendered and that during the intervening day the members of the court were to fast. That provision had the effect of preventing a trial during a feast, when fasting was prohibited. The delay of execution also provided additional time for evidence or testimony to be discovered in the defendant's behalf.

In a local council, 11 votes of 23 were required for acquittal, 13 for conviction. Voting was done from the youngest to the oldest members, so that the youngest would not be influenced by the older. If found innocent, freed immediately. If guilty, sentence was not pronounced until 2 days later and the council members were required to fast during the intervening days. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day the council was reconvened and each judge in turn was asked if he had changed his decision. A vote for condemnation could be changed to acquittal but not the reverse.

If guilty verdict, prisoner escorted to the place of execution. A Herald went before the slow moving procession declaring in a loud voice, this man [stating his name] is led to punishment for such a crime; the witnesses who have sworn against him are such and such person; if anyone has evidence to give in his favor, let him come forth quickly. If additional info came forward, prisoner would be brought back for reconsideration.

Governing principle in capital cases was, "the Sanhedrin is to save, not destroy, life." In addition to the above provisions, the president of the council was required to remind prospective witnesses of the preciousness of human life and to admonish them to be certain that their testimony was both true and complete.

Additionally, the trial was supposed to take place at the temple precincts, during the daytime for transparency and openness.

This system would have been fair and merciful. But what occurred was anything but that.

Historians note that the Great Sanhedrin had degenerated into a mess of political favoritism and power, rather than operating on experience, godliness, and wisdom.

The goal was to find a reason to put Jesus to death, not to determine if He was innocent or guilty.

It was hidden and secret, in the middle of the night.

False witnesses were drummed up and testimony was distorted.

There was no delay between conviction and execution, except the time necessary to convince the Romans to put him to death.

There were essentially 2 trials, only one of which we'll see today. The first was a Jewish trial conducted at night and formalized at dawn. He was then sent to Pilate, the Roman governor, because only the Roman courts had the authority to pronounce the death penalty as a policy of their occupation.

The charges are changed when He is brought before the Romans because they would not find Him deserving of death for a religious violation.

Luke 23:1-2 ... brought Him before Pilate. <sup>2</sup> And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

1. Captured through ***betrayal*** (26:47-56)
  - a. Jesus was just finishing praying and speaking to His disciples when Judas and a large crowd approached him.
    - i. The details highlight the betrayal
    - ii. Judas is described as "one of the 12" – Mark and Luke include that description as well in their accounts. It highlights the betrayal, just like eating a meal together earlier.
    - iii. He identified Jesus with a kiss, cultural sign of affection and friendship, as it is today in many eastern and middle-eastern cultures.
    - iv. He calls Jesus Rabbi
    - v. Jesus calls him friend
  - b. The crowd was large
    - i. They came from the chief priests and elders of the people, but it doesn't say that they were the elders of the people
    - ii. Among the group was a slave of the high priest (v 51)
    - iii. **John 18:12** So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him,
    - iv. Officers of the temple given some limited jurisdiction by the Romans, also a cohort of Roman soldiers (which could have been up to 600 men)
  - c. Peter struck out and cut the ear off of the slave of the high priest
    - i. **Luke 22:49-51** When those who were around Him saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" <sup>50</sup> And one of them struck the slave of the high priest

and cut off his right ear. <sup>51</sup> But Jesus answered and said, "Stop! No more of this." And He touched his ear and healed him.

- d. Jesus goes with the soldiers because He chooses to. He has already wrestled through this in the garden of Gethsemane.
  - i. **John 18:11** So Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"
  - ii. He could have called more than 12 legions of angels. 1 legion was about 6,000 troops so 12 was 72,000 angels.
    - 1. Don't picture precious moments figurines with puppy dog eyes that are too big for their heads.
    - 2. Think of the angel of the Lord that wiped out 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in 2 Kings 19.
- e. Learning from Jesus' example:

**1 Peter 2:21-24** For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, <sup>22</sup> WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; <sup>23</sup> and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; <sup>24</sup> and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

- i. **Lamenting**, crying out, and asking for **relief** are appropriate.
    - 1. We can learn from Jesus' example about how to stand firm in swirling events.
    - 2. Jesus had lamented, asked for relief, asked for the cup to be taken away if there is any way.
    - 3. Likewise we can plead, weep, lament, and pour out our soul before God, even as we saw in psalm 13 several weeks ago when we studied a psalm of lament.
      - a. Psalm 13 – crying, requesting, and trusting
  - ii. Commit to following the Father's **will**.
- f. Learning from the disciples (negative) example:

We can learn from the disciples' negative example as well. (Partially adapted from John MacArthur)

- i. They were **unprepared**.
    - 1. They had fallen asleep at this time of Jesus' great struggle. They confused good intentions with spiritual strength, they were powerless when testing came.
    - 2. It is an absolute spiritual law that a believer who neglects the study of God's Word and neglects fellowship with Him in prayer will be unprepared. When testing comes he will be weak, afraid, unfaithful, and ineffective.
  - ii. They were **impulsive**.
    - 1. Reacted on the basis of emotion rather than revelation. They did not look at the situation from the perfect perspective of God's truth but from the imperfect and

distorted perspective of their own understanding. Reacted based on their emotions rather than God's Word and in the promised power of His Spirit.

2. Without preparation, all we are left with is our impulsiveness in the moment.
3. Y-diagram

iii. They were ***impatient***.

1. became anxious and impatient with things did not go as they thought they should. Could not wait for the Lord's deliverance so they devised their own, i.e. Peter taking up the sword

2. Convicted through ***injustice*** (26:57-68)

- a. As mentioned in the intro, this describes a gathering of the Sanhedrin overseen by Caiaphas, the high priest, although it's unclear how formal this was.
- b. Their goal from the beginning was to find a way to put Him to death (v. 59), and they sought witnesses that would enable them to do so.
- c. Apparently they wanted the false witnesses to be believable, so even though many came forward, it wasn't until two came forward and recounted Jesus' statement about the temple that they found what they were looking for.
  - i. **John 2:19-21** Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup> The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup> But He was speaking of the temple of His body.
  - ii. Not easy to see why this was deserving of death, perhaps it was because of the reverence given to the temple.
  - iii. It may not have been enough because the high priest leaned on Jesus to respond and incriminate himself.
- d. He asked Jesus whether he was the Christ, the Son of God (vv. 63-64)
  - i. Why did Jesus respond cryptically?
    1. Imagine you have just earned your doctorate in philosophy and are teaching at ISU. You're with a group of people when someone appears to have a heart attack. The cliché question goes up, "Is there a doctor in the house?" Someone has heard you referred to as "doctor" so they say, "Are you a doctor?" You can't quite reply "yes" because it's obvious they mean something different. As a philosophy professor you may say something like, "Can anyone really know what one is? Afterall, what is the ontological basis for being?"
    2. Or consider another analogy, if someone belligerently asks you, "So, are you one of those fundamentalist Christians?" You might be hesitant to answer affirmatively. Does he mean like the members of the very small but notorious Westburo Baptist church who hold awful signs at funerals for soldiers? Or does he mean something similar to a fundamentalist Islamic terrorist? Or does he mean that you actually believe what the Bible says is true?

3. The high priest means something different by Messiah – as a military ruler who will deliver the people.
4. Jesus' response is something like
  - a. That is your word, not mine
  - b. Yes, but not in the way you mean
  - c. I would not have put it that way, but since you do I cannot deny it
  - d. The words are yours. This much I add to them...
- e. They take his statement as referring to himself as the promised Son of man referred to in Psalm 110 as sitting at the right hand of God and in Daniel 7 as coming on the clouds as blasphemous. They have heard enough.
  - i. Not clear again that this really is blasphemy even as they defined it.
  - ii. Clearly, it's not blasphemy because it's true. But even if they didn't believe it was true, it seems to be a stretch to charge him with blasphemy.
  - iii. But they had the evidence they thought they needed.
- f. The injustice and betrayal of these scenes shows us why Jesus came.
  - i. **1 Peter 3:18** For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;
  - ii. God cares about justice. We see injustice on display in these scenes. And we see that Jesus is willing to endure injustice to bring us to God.



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