



The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 12

July 5, 2026

No. 27

The Innocence Of Jesus

Bill Cavender

The Bible records six different trials that Jesus endured after He was seized in the Garden of Gethsemane. There were three Jewish trials: (1) Before Annas (Jn. 18:13,24); (2) Before Caiaphas, aided by a group of priests and the Sanhedrin (Mt. 26:57-68; Mk. 14:53-65; Jn. 18:14-28); (3) Before the Sanhedrin, near the dawn of day (Mt. 27:1-2; Mk. 15:1; Lk. 22:66-71). Then there was the first trial before Pilate (Mt. 27:1-2; Mk. 15:1; Lk. 23:1-7; Jn. 18:28-32). Pilate acquitted Jesus; the Jews made further charges against Him, so Pilate sent Jesus to Herod upon learning that Jesus was of Galilee (Mt. 27:11-14; Mk. 15:2-5; Lk. 23:3-7; Jn. 18:33-38). Before Herod, Jesus was mocked but not condemned as being guilty (Lk. 23:6-12). Before Pilate the second time, Jesus was sentenced to death at the instigation of the Jewish rulers, and was taken away to be crucified.

During the two trials before Pilate, Jesus was proclaimed to be innocent seven times by Pilate, in Pilate's words and action. Consider these, please:

1. After his first conversation with Jesus, Pilate said, "I find no fault in this man" (Jn. 18:29-38; Lk. 23:4).
2. After Jesus returned to Pilate from Herod, Pilate said, "Behold, I, having examined him before, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod . . ." (Lk. 23:6-15).
3. After offering to release a prisoner to the Jews, and offering to scourge Jesus and then release Him, Luke records, "And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him . . ." (Lk. 23:22).
4. When he washed his hands before the multitude, declaring the innocence of Jesus, Pilate said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person" (Mt. 27:24).
5. After Jesus had been mocked, whipped, and the robe put on Him, Pilate said, "Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him" (Jn. 19:4).
6. When Pilate gave permission for His crucifixion, he said, "Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him" (Jn. 19:6).
7. After Pilate learned of Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, he talked with Jesus for the last time. John records, "Upon this Pilate sought to release him..." (Jn. 19:7-12), thus declaring, in fact, the innocence of Jesus for the seventh time.

Yet this moral coward, whose name has lived in infamy for, lo, these many centuries, delivered up to a felon's death the only truly innocent man who ever lived on earth, the only one who truly and legally deserved to live and not to die.

But what of those moral cowards, men claiming to follow Him and to believe His claims and words, what of them? What is the difference between Pilate, the Roman, and John Doe, the Christian, who crucifies the Son of God afresh and puts Him to an open shame by sin, ugliness, bitterness, hatred, arrogance, transgression and apostasy (Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26-31)? What of them?

Guardian of Truth XXIX: 3, p. 67 February 7, 1985

A Trial Lawyer Examines the Trial of Jesus

by Larry L. Crain - A trial attorney in civil rights and constitutional law
(abridged by Jefferson David Tant)

During Easter, many believers reflect on the Crucifixion of Christ. As a lawyer, I have been intrigued by the criminal trial culminating in Christ's execution. The Gospels give four narratives in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They describe both trials before the Sanhedrin and Pilate. Together, they provide telling insights into the mockery and irregularity of these proceedings.

Lawyers would call the following "reversible errors" committed by the judges in the trial. What is even worse, the ones in charge of Jesus' prosecution were the most astute lawyers and highest courts in Israel at the time, who surely must have recognized the injustices being committed.

An Illegal Arrest – Jesus had just observed the Passover. After that feast, Jesus and the eleven went to Gethsemane to pray. At the approach of midnight, a mob led by Roman soldiers, members of the Temple Guard carrying swords and torches, accompanied by Judas, arrest Jesus.

Privately Examined – Jesus was taken to Annas' house, the brother of the High Priest Caiaphas, and there examined in private—a violation of Hebrew law.

Proceedings Were Conducted At Night – The trial of a capital case was strictly forbidden at night. The analogy used in the Talmud was like the treating of a wound. Care was required to examine the evidence in the clear light of day.

Court Convened Before The Morning Sacrifice – The Great Sanhedrin convened court at the close of the morning sacrifice and had to conclude before the evening sacrifice.

The Proceedings Were Conducted On The Day Preceding The Jewish Sabbath – Court could not be held on the Sabbath, or a feast day, or a holy day.

Trial Was Conducted In One Day – To assure due deliberation and reflection, particularly where human life was at stake, Hebrew law required that the trial should last a minimum of two days to allow time for the judges to sleep, fast, meditate and pray.

Sentence Was Pronounced On Uncorroborated Confession – A fundamental principle of Hebrew law prohibited conviction of a crime based solely on the confession of the accused; the law required corroboration by two witnesses.

The Unanimous Verdict – "Guilty" on the very day of the trial had the effect of an acquittal. Remember there were no advocates. The judges were deemed the defenders of the accused. Thus, a unanimous verdict meant the accused had no friend or defender on the panel. To the Jewish mind, this was the equivalent of mob violence. Scripture tells us: *"And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered Him to Pilate"* (Mark 15:1).

These errors confirm the travesty of injustice and the political show trial of Jesus. While we look back with disdain upon the mocking criminal conviction of the One who embodied innocence, we also regard it as a necessary stepping-stone in God's plan of redemption through the cross.