

It is common knowledge for most Christians to know that Jesus sat under various trials on the night He was arrested, but it is not so common for Christians to know exactly what those trials were all about.

**JESUS WAS TREATED UNFAIRLY BY SINFUL MEN IN VARIOUS TRIALS LEADING TO HIS DEATH, BUT ALL OF THAT PROVIDED FOR SINFUL MEN TO BE TREATED UNFAIRLY BEFORE A JUST AND HOLY GOD.**

Jesus faced 6 trials in all. 3 trials were under Jewish authorities, and 3 trials were under Roman authorities.

**Trial #1** - Jesus was brought to be questioned by Annas.  
**John 18:12-24**

Jesus was arrested by the Roman battalion (approx. 300-600 soldiers) and the commander of the officers of the Jews, and He was brought bound to Annas, the father-in-law of the high priest of the Jews. This took place immediately after Judas arrived in the garden of Gethsemane to betray Jesus. This must have been late in the night, because Jesus had already shared a meal with His disciples that evening and spent approximately 3 hours in prayer. Annas was the former high priest and a leader within the priests of Israel.

This trial was religious in nature. It was a Jewish trial. Annas was a religious leader of the Jews. He was not a Roman governmental leader, but his word could sway governmental actions because Roman officers worked with the Jewish leaders.

Annas questioned Jesus about His disciples and His teaching (18:19). The questioning must have been with the intent to accuse Jesus and His followers of secret behavior against the religious authorities (18:20-21). Jesus said that He taught in public and that anyone who listened to Him could testify of what He taught. In response to Jesus' answer, He was struck by one of the servants of the high priest (18:22). Jesus basically responded after that by saying, "you just struck Me, but provided no evidence that what I said was wrong."

This questioning seems to be very short. Annas may have felt like he was getting no where with Jesus, so he sent Jesus bound to Caiaphas (18:24).

**Trial #2** - Jesus was brought to be questioned by Caiaphas.  
**John 18:24; Matthew 26:57-67; Mark 14:53-65**

These trials took place at the house of Caiaphas. It would appear that Caiaphas and Annas lived on a shared family property. The courtyard would have been shared while Annas and Caiaphas had different living quarters.

Now, the exact details of Caiaphas' questioning are not clear. It appears that by the time Jesus is before Caiaphas, all the chief priests and all the members of the Sanhedrin council were present. The Sanhedrin, according to Blueletterbible.org, was the great council of Jerusalem, consisting of 71 members and made up of scribes, elders, prominent members of the high priestly families, and the president of the assembly. This would be like the Supreme Court of 1st century Judaism. They were responsible to consider severe cases that pertained to Israel. The Sanhedrin could determine the death penalty but could not carry out the death penalty until it was confirmed by the Roman procurator (Roman provincial administrator). This word is most often translated as "council" in the English Bibles, but the word "Sanhedrin" is a transliterated word from the Greek work *synedrion*.

With the members of the Sanhedrin present, the trial under Caiaphas is more involved than the trial under Annas. During this trial, the members of the council put their heads together to find a fault in Jesus. They tried to obtain a testimony against Jesus, but they were having trouble. Eventually, two witnesses come forward to say that Jesus claimed He would destroy the temple of God. These two witnesses were false

witness, because Jesus never said He would destroy the temple. He claimed that the Israelite people would destroy His body in death (John 2:19). Jesus used the word temple to metaphorically speak about His own body. Even though these two came forward misusing Jesus' words, Caiaphas took it as valid, because the two men gave the same accusation. Under Jewish Law, no charge could be established without the testimony of a minimum of two witnesses (Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Now that two witnesses had come forward, Caiaphas had to look to Jesus for Jesus to give a defense, but Jesus kept silent (Matt. 26:63). He kept silent for two reasons: #1. He needed to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7 *"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth."* #2. Jesus knew that any defense He gave would be pushed by the wayside because they weren't going to believe whatever He said (Luke 22:67).

After Jesus was silent to Caiaphas, Caiaphas adjures Jesus, or commands Him under oath before God to give a reply to Caiaphas' question. The question wasn't really a question though. Caiaphas said, *"tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God."* To that, Jesus responded by telling Caiaphas that what Caiaphas just said is true. Jesus said, "You have said it yourself." Then Jesus moves on to basically say, "you said it yourself, even though I know you don't believe it's true, and in spite of the fact that you don't think it's true that I am Christ, you will one day see Me sitting at the right hand of Power, coming on the clouds of heaven." The exact wording in the NASB is: *"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."*

When Jesus said that, He was quoting a combination of Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 110:1. In Psalm 110:1, we read about King David's Lord sitting at the right hand of the LORD - Yahweh, and in Daniel 7:13, we read of one like a Son of Man with the clouds of heaven who is given by the Ancient of Days a kingdom, glory, and dominion that all people, nations and languages should serve that Son of Man."

Jesus was already known for calling Himself the Son of Man, and by the combining of these two verses, Caiaphas knows with certainty that Jesus is claiming to be the Lord over David, and is claiming to be the Christ - the Messiah - the anointed One of God, set apart to be Israel's King, and as the one like a Son of Man, He was claiming to be the Son of God in human flesh (Psalm 2:6-7).

We also note that a claim to be the Son of God, in the mind of the Jews, was a claim to be equal with God and a claim to be God. We learn that from John 5:18 and John 10:33. That was their mindset, and rightfully so as you consider what the Old Testament says about that person called the Son of Man/Son of God/anointed one of God.

In response to that claim of Jesus, Caiaphas declares Jesus to have spoken blasphemy. Why? Because Caiaphas had a fixed conclusion that Jesus was not the Messiah nor the Son of God. Now that Jesus plainly claimed to be the Messiah and Son of God before the high priest, Caiaphas essentially says, "we need no more evidence. This man is a blasphemer."

The conclusion of the council was that Jesus should be sentenced to death, because in the Law of Moses, Leviticus 24:16 tells us, "the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death."

To blaspheme means to speak evil against another's good name. If Jesus is a man claiming to be the Christ, and yet, He was not the Christ, then he was speaking evil against the name of the LORD and would deserve death. But how could we know whether or not Jesus' claim to be the Christ was accurate? According to the Word of God, it was by the resurrection. If Jesus did not come back from the grave, then He was not the Christ, but because He rose from that grave, He was declared to be the Christ, the Son of God (Romans 1:3).

The trial under Caiaphas concludes with Jesus being mocked, spat in the face, slapped, and punched all while being blindfolded (Matt. 26:67; Luke 22:64). Their hatred of Him reared its ugly head. These were apparently men of God, mocking and beating a man based off of a false witness. This was evil stuff taking place.

**Trail #3** - Jesus was presented before the Sanhedrin for an official trial at day break.  
**Matthew 27:1-2; Luke 22:66-71; Mark 15:1**

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all note that the council assembled together when it was day. In noting that, we conclude that this third trial was the official trial that needed to take place with the Sanhedrin after sunrise. This trial took place in the regular meeting place of the council.

This is a short trial, because the questioning was almost identical as before in Caiaphas' trial. They asked Jesus to tell them if He is the Christ. In response, Jesus basically says, "No matter what I say, you will use it against me, but I'll still say this: I'm going to leave this place and be seated at the right hand of power of God. You will use my words against me, and when I leave this world, I will take my rightful place at the right hand of God in heaven."

After Jesus claimed that He is going to the right hand of the power of God, they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "Yes, I am."

As plain as day, Jesus tells the religious leaders, "I am the Son of God." Obviously, they think He is a blaspheming liar, and they have the evidence they want to declare Him worthy of death.

Having made this conclusion, they then took Jesus to the Praetorium.

**Trail #4** - Jesus was brought before Pilate for an official Roman hearing.  
**John 18:28-38; Luke 23:1-7; Matthew 27:11-14; Mark 15:1-5**

I'll read to you John's account, and I will comment along the way.

V. 28 - The governor's headquarters is also known as the praetorium, and the Roman governor of Judea at the time was Pontius Pilate (Luke 3:1). Pilate was appointed to this position in A.D. 26 by Tiberius Caesar, who was emperor of Rome from A.D. 14-37. Pilate was governor until A.D. 36 Charles Ryrie noted that He was in charge of the army of occupation, kept the taxes flowing to Rome, had power of life and death over his subjects, appointed the high priests, and decided cases involving capital punishment.

We learn that all this happened very quickly. Jesus went from Caiaphas to the Sanhedrin to Pilate within minutes of each other.

The Passover Lamb meal had been eaten the night before, but immediately following that Passover Lamb meal began the 7 days of eating unleavened bread. The Jews used the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover interchangeably.

Vv. 29-30 - Basically, they say, "Look we don't want to bother you this early with the details. Just trust us. He is evil, give us approval to kill Him."

V. 31 - This was their dilemma. They did not have legal authority to put Jesus to death. They needed permission from Pilate. I am sure Pilate knew that but He suggested to them that they deal with their criminal on their own just to rub it in their face that he had authority over them.

V. 32 - Jesus said He was going to be lifted up to die, indicating He would be raised on a Roman cross.

Vv. 33-38 - Pilate didn't know what to do with Jesus. The Jews give him no evidence of Jesus being worthy of death, and Pilate's questioning of Jesus doesn't lead Him to think that Jesus is a threat to His political position, so Pilate doesn't see any problems and tries to avoid giving the Jews what they ask for.

After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him."

Now from here, I need to take you to Luke 23, not only to find out what happens next but to also get more details of this first Roman trial under Pilate.

Luke 23:1-7

Vv. 1-2 - John said they were trying to avoid telling Pilate the real reason for their desire to kill Jesus. They wanted Him dead on account of blasphemy, but they knew that would not hold any weight for Pilate, so Luke actually records some of the accusations they made against Jesus before Pilate. Rather than mentioning blasphemy, they twist the story to accuse Jesus of governmental treason. They accuse Him of boycotting taxes to Ceaser, even though Jesus had already declared the importance of paying taxes to Ceaser back in Luke 20:25. They also get Pilate's attention with telling him that Jesus claims to be a King. That is true, but they mention it to Pilate in a way that would pose a threat to his political status and that is why Pilate goes to question Him about it.

Vv. 3-4 - As we know from John's account, Jesus claimed to be King of a Kingdom that is not worldly, but heavenly. That eased Pilate's concerns about worldly governmental power, and he saw Jesus as being no threat to him.

Vv. 5-7 - Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee, and Pilate thinks to himself, "I'm off the hook! I'm not responsible for a Galilean. I will send Him to Herod and let Herod deal with this!" Charles Ryrie said that Pilate did not have to do this, but likely he chose to do this just to get himself out of the dilemma he was facing.

**Trail #5** - Jesus was brought to Herod, who was in Jerusalem at the time.  
**Luke 23:6-12**

Herod Antipas was son of Herod the Great. He was a tetrarch. That means he ruled over one fourth of a particular territory, but within his rule, was the region of Galilee. C.I. Scofield noted that his reign as tetrarch was from 4 B.C. until he was banished in A.D. 39. Herod Antipas is the one whom John the Baptist rebuked for his sin in marrying his brother's wife.

Very little is said about the trial with Herod, simply because Jesus stayed quiet. Herod also questioned Him but got no answers. With the continued accusations and the lack of defense, this led to more mocking. Eventually, Herod had a kingly purple robe placed on Jesus (Matt. 27:28), obviously trying to make a joke out of Jesus. He sent Him back to Pilate because he could find no true guilt, and he too did not want to deal with the situation.

**Trial #6** - Jesus was brought back to Pilate, to eventually be given up in crucifixion.  
**John 18:39-19:16; Mark 15:6-15; Matthew 27: 15-26; Luke 23:13-24**

Pilate's offer was to release Israel's King. It may be that Pilate was mocking Israel in saying to them that Jesus was their King, but there is also no doubt that Pilate was afraid of Jesus through all this. Pilate knew criminal minds. He knew evil men, but as for Jesus, he couldn't figure Him out. Pilate offered to release Jesus, and the Jews cried out for him to release the notorious Barabbas, a man known to have been a robber and an insurrectionist (insistent revolt against civil authority) murderer.

The Jews eventually persuade Pilate to consider his own position. They pose a threat to his status. If he doesn't sentence Jesus to death, he is allowing a self-proclaimed king to live, and he is going to have to face Tiberius Caesar for his actions. So Pilate, it would appear, in order to save his status, releases Barabbas and lets Jesus be handed over to crucifixion.

It's not fair for Jesus to die, but at the same, it's not fair that we should have life.