



Matthew 26:57-68; 27:1-26

THE TRIALS OF JESUS

*Barabbas seems a strange name: “bar Abba” means “son of Abba,” i.e., “son of the father.” Perhaps Barabbas was the son of a famous rabbi. Some manuscripts preserve his name as “Jesus Barabbas.” ...Barabbas was no ordinary villain but a **lestes** (cf. Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19; John 18:40). Although [the Greek word] **lestes** can refer to a robber, it more probably refers to insurrectionists. Josephus constantly uses it of the Zealots. Neither theft nor violent robbery was a capital offense, but insurrection was. Revolts and bloodshed fostered by guerilla action were common and Barabbas had been caught. In the eyes of many of the people he would not be a “notorious” villain but a hero. It may be that the two who were crucified with Jesus were co-rebels with Barabbas, for Matthew 27:38 calls them **lestai** (“rebels,” “guerrillas,” or “insurrectionists”). The fact that three crosses were prepared strongly suggests that Pilate had already ordered that preparations be made for the execution of the three rebels. If so, Jesus the Messiah actually took the place of the rebel [Jesus] Barabbas because the people preferred the political rebel and nationalist hero to the Son of God.*

—D. A. Carson

Jesus has predicted four times (Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; 26:2) that He would be betrayed, condemned, and delivered over to the Gentiles to be mocked, scourged, and crucified. That hour has come.

THE SPIRITUAL TRIAL (26:36-56)

Jesus’ ministry is framed by two instances of extreme trial and temptation. In the wilderness (4:1-11), Jesus is tempted by Satan to put His own desires before God’s. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus faces the choice of whether to submit to God’s will or to pursue His own.

- *Ademoneo* (26:37; Mk. 14:33). Great anguish or distress.
- *Ekthambeo* (Mk. 14:33). To be struck with terror.
- *Agonia* (Lk. 22:44). Intense physical and mental pain.
- *Perilupos* (26:38; Mk. 14:34). “A sorrow so deep that it almost kills.”

O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will. (26:39)

The only path to spiritual victory is through _____.

THE RELIGIOUS TRIAL (26:57-68)

The Judge. Jesus is arrested on Passover night and escorted to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. Caiaphas has already determined that Jesus needs to die to protect the nation and to preserve the power of the religious establishment (26:3-4; cf. John 11:49-53).

The Trial. The trial breaks many rules written in the Mishnah—a trial by night, coerced witnesses, and a hasty verdict. In the face of all the false accusations, Jesus remains _____ (Isaiah 53:7).

AN OVERVIEW OF JESUS’ TRIALS

- Before Annas (Jn. 18:12-23)
- Before Caiaphas (Mt. 26:57-68)
- Before Sanhedrin (Lk. 22:66-71)
- 1st Before Pilate (Mt. 27:11-14)
- Before Herod Antipas (Lk. 23:6-12)
- 2nd Before Pilate (Mt. 27:15-22)
- Flogging of Jesus (Jn. 19:1-3)
- 3rd Before Pilate (Jn. 19:4-11)
- Pilate Washes His Hands (Mt. 27:24)

Therefore, He had to be like His brothers in every way, so that He could become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tested and has suffered, He is able to help those who are tested.

—Hebrews 2:17-18 (HCSB)

I have a God who knows what it is to weep and who weeps for me, weeps with me, understands to the depths the tears of things.

—Malcolm Guite

Gethsemane is where He died; the cross is only the evidence.

—Leonard Ravenhill

God has no respect for anything we bring Him; He is after one thing only, and that is our unconditional surrender to Him.

—Oswald Chambers

Caiaphas places Jesus under oath to say whether He is “the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus answers, “*You said it*” (26:25; 27:11). Caiaphas sees Jesus in one particular way but one day he will see Jesus as the Son of Man ruling and reigning over all the earth (Dan. 7:13-14; Phil. 2:9-11).

The Verdict. Jesus is guilty of blasphemy and worthy of death.

Religion rejects Jesus because He exposes their self-righteousness and confronts their tendency to put _____ over love and a hunger for _____ over a hunger for God’s truth (27:1-10).

THE POLITICAL TRIAL (27:11-26)

With the verdict of death, Jesus is bound by the religious leaders and delivered over to the Romans who alone had the authority to execute.

The Judge. Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea from AD 26-36. He was a stern man who perhaps served in the Praetorian Guard under the command of Sejanus. As Sejanus’ star rose in Rome so did Pilate’s. But in AD 31, Sejanus was accused of _____ and executed by the emperor Tiberius. This put Pilate in a very precarious position.

The Trial. The trial before Pilate had several stages but Matthew condenses the civil trial into seven questions/statements by Pilate:

1. *Are you the king of the Jews?* (27:11)
2. *Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?* (27:13)
3. *Whom do you want me to release to you—Barabbas or Jesus?* (27:17)

[Jesus] Barabbas (“son of a father”) led an insurrection against Rome and committed murder in the process (Mk. 15:7; Luke 23:19; Acts 3:14). He was a false messiah. So the question remains today: *Which Jesus do you want?*

4. *Which of the two do you want me to release to you?* (27:21)
5. *What then shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?* (27:22)
6. *Why, what even has He done?* (27:23)
7. *I am innocent of the blood of this just man. It is on you.* (27:24)

The Verdict. Jesus is completely _____ (the spotless Lamb) yet also completely rejected by humanity (Isaiah 53:3-6; 1 Peter 1:19).

When it comes to the question of who is responsible for putting Jesus on the cross, the answer is _____ (cf. Isaiah 53:6; Romans 5:8).

The fewer the reasons, the higher the volume. In any argument, the quieter side is almost always right.

—Dale Bruner

Trying to be holy from a self-strength carried on by ways of self-invention, unto the end of a self-righteousness, is the soul and substance of all false religion.

—John Owen (1616-83)

Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.

—Blaise Pascal (1623-62)

Sejanus was a dedicated anti-Semite who wanted to exterminate the Jewish race. Apparently Pilate implemented Sejanus’ anti-Jewish policy in Judea... However, with the death of Sejanus, one can readily see that Pilate was a man with a broken backbone.

—Harold W. Hoehner

Quite literally, Pilate asks the crowd if they want Jesus, the son of a father, or Jesus, the Son of the Father. This wouldn’t be the first time people chose the wrong Jesus. Throughout history, Christians have made Jesus into who they want Him to be. We often choose a Jesus that looks a bit more like us: physically, politically, ideologically. The crowd that day did the same, and wound up murdering the person who loves them the most.

—Brad Hoffman

Both Jews and Romans were actively involved in the death of Jesus. But from a theological perspective no one person is more to blame than any other. Jesus bore the sins of every person in the world. God could rightly point the finger at every one of us and legitimately claim that we killed his Son.

—Craig L. Blomberg