

Trials

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⁴ Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man." ⁵ But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here." ⁶ On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. ⁷ When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. ⁹ He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹ Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. ¹² That day Herod and Pilate became friends — before this they had been enemies. (Luke 23-NIV)

The Jews and Romans made the most **fatal error** ever committed in the history of the world-**they had executed the sinless savior Jesus!**

Let me tell you about a few other fatal errors:

The handwriting was shaky. The stationery was lined, loose leaf paper. The ink was black and the tone of the author's soul was desperate. The note was dated Feb 6, 1974, and addressed to the US government.

I am sending ten dollars for the blankets I stole in WW 2. My mind cannot rest. Sorry I am so late. It was signed, "an ex-GI." Then there was a postscript, "I want to be ready to meet God."

And meet God, Pilate and Herod do. In trials 4, 5 and 6. This recruit is not alone in his guilt. His letter is one of the literally tons sent to the US government since letters have been arriving and have been stored from 1811.

The US **government's conscious** fund has grown to date, reaching 6.5 million dollars. One man writing from Bazil sent in \$50 dollars to cover a pair of calvary boots, two pairs of trousers and 1 case of military rations and 30 pounds of frozen meat he stole from the army between 1943-1946.

Regardless of the size of the refund or the size of the theft, the thieves all have one thing in common, their remorse and regret is unstoppable, unpalatable and unmanageable.

An IRS employee mailed in 1 dollar to cover 4 pens she had never returned to the office. A man from Ohio, submitted one dollar with the following note, "When I was a boy, I put some pennies on a railroad track and the train flattened them. I used a dime or quarter in a silver coating experiment in high school. I have been eaten up with guilt because I know it is illegal to deface coins. I want to be a law-abiding citizen."

Regret over mashed pennies.

Remorse over ball point pens.

Rehabilitation needed for stealing army boots.

Where do you store your stumbles, your sins, your sufferings? Do your pockets bulge? Is your garage full? Do you need to rent a storage locker as your foibles and marital unfaithfulness grows?

Today, you can be free because Jesus died to forgive your sins, and he paid a massive price to do that.

We are including this easter in our study the trials of Jesus and we are learning there is more to the story of the cross then the 6 hours between 9am and 3pm. This year our study includes 6 trials, each teaching us valuable lessons about the suffering of Jesus before the most evil, despicable and wretched Jewish and Romans leaders of the ancient world.

We are looking at the life of Jesus Christ as he is judicially trialed for blasphemy by the Jews and treason by the Romans. The Jews wanted Jesus dead, but they could not kill him so the Sanhedrin took Jesus to Pilate, hoping he would take-up their cause and find Jesus guilty of treason and then have him executed.

The Sanhedrin new there was too much danger in stoning Jesus because he was too popular. And Rome removed the Sanhedrin's right to execute people, anyway!

Under Jewish law, Jesus was guilty of blasphemy.

Under Roman law Jesus was guilty of treason.

These unauthorized, illegal, sham trials started after Jesus' betrayal, arrest and kiss by Judas on what Christians call today, **Good Friday**. For Jesus it was anything but good, it is Friday 2:00am.

The **6 trials lasted 6 hours** until Friday at about 8:00am, when Jesus began his humiliating and painful walk to Golgotha.

Let me chase a theological rabbit and remind you that you are either at the cross today, **by chance or by choice**. When Jesus left the trials having been declared guilty of treason and the punishment phases of execution was about to begin, **he had to carry his cross**.

Jesus began that walk to Golgotha and as he did he bled, he agonized over every step, he prayed and then suddenly Jesus dropped to the ground. Unable to move. He lay in the Jerusalem dirt, what a contrast from the **cheers** a week earlier, which are now **jeers**.

A passerby named Simon of Cyrene was enlisted to carry Jesus' cross. Let me read from the biblical the account. *As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. (Matthew 27:32-NIV)*

Simon was so close to Jesus he could see the blood dripping. So, close he could see the facing grimacing. So, close he could see the bones in his back quivering.

Simon was so close to Jesus he could hear Jesus words, **daughters of Jerusalem, don't cry for me, cry for yourselves and your children**.

More than anything carrying Jesus' cross, brought Simon into the very footsteps of Jesus. How about you, are you following that close to Jesus? To hear his voice. To receive his words. To see his emotions.

Jesus was then nailed to a Roman cross.

It was there on a cross for 6 hours, starting at 9:00am that heavens answer to OUR sin problem hung.

Perfection being pummeled!

Holiness facing hell.

Sinlessness being savaged!

An innocent sacrifice dying as a Messiah for the Jews, but also perfect lamb dying for the sins of the world. Never forget, the New Testament tells us, *For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. (1 Corinthians 5:7b-NCV)*

Jesus was emotionally exhausted from 6 hours of illegal trials as he was **paraded** before the Jewish leaders Annas, Caiphas, the Sanhedrin.

Then Jesus is tossed to the **wolves** of Pilate, Herod and back to Pilate who were both Roman. 6 trials in all. 6 trials that took 6 hours. Then 6 hours Jesus hung on a cross from 9:00am to 3:00pm.

Do you see the symbolism of the number 6? Everything about being evil, wretched and sinfully human was on display during these two 6-hour blocks.

Mankind's arrogance. Sinful man's abuses. Jewish and Roman wretchedness.

Despicable. Detestable. Disgusting.

These 6 hours left Jesus physically exhausted because of beatings, sleep deprivation, lack of food, spitting's, slapping's, public scourging's, finally the carrying of his cross and the pain of being nailed to the cross.

The last 6 hours of Jesus life from 9am to 3pm included, darkness, forgiveness, earthquakes, abandonment by God the Father, verbal abuse by criminals, verbal abuse by religious leaders attending the crucifixion and verbal abuse passer-byers.

Then his final words around 3pm were, *Then Jesus shouted, "Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!" And with those words he breathed his last. (Luke 23:46-NLT)*

The Passover lamb was now sacrificed.

And it all can be summed up in the following word picture:

2 beams. One vertical. One horizontal.

Horizontal - embracing the world's sin.

Vertical - pointing to a loving, all merciful and holy Father.

Let's return to a lesser painful time, about a week before Jesus was crucified. Lazarus has been raised from the dead, and dancing, shouting and partying is unfolding just 2 miles east of Jerusalem in a neighboring suburb of Bethany.

Passover week is about to start, and 100's of thousands of Jews are filling the streets of Jerusalem, and everyone is asking where is Jesus?

⁵⁶ They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, "What do you think? Isn't he coming to the festival at all?" (John 11:56-NIV)

All four of the Gospels, mention Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem. When you look closely at Jesus triumphal entry it seems to be a departure from Jesus' aversion to grabbing the limelight, to recognition, acclaim and fame.

³⁵ They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

38a "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 19-NIV)

The massive crowds throw down their personal coats, cloaks, tree branches, anything they own showing the utmost love, respect and affection for Jesus Christ from Galilee.

Suddenly, with Kansas City Chief like chanting and waving of hands the noise erupts into, *"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 19:38a-NIV)*

Say it with me, *"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord."* Louder, *"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord."*

This chanting mesmerizes the crowd. It turned the crowd into rabid religious followers who would at that movement have done anything to follow their King Jesus!

Jesus normally recoiled from such a display of fanaticism, frenzy, delirium, madness, mania and hysteria. This time Jesus let them yell and worship him, until they were horse! Until they were blue in the face.

The indignant religious leaders continued to build a judicial case against this blasphemous, treasonous Galilean rabbi. Jesus knew what was in their hearts and he makes one of his most curt and to the point statements when he says, *"He replied, "If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!" (Luke 19:40-NLT)*

In reaction the religious leaders, countered with, *So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!" (John 12:19-NIV)*

The streets are filled with the blind who are now healed, the deaf now hearing, the lame now dancing and the demon possessed now free as the people begin chatting, applauding, and throwing personal items at Jesus' as he passes by smiling, greeting and touching all who would get close enough.

The Sanhedrin resented Jesus, and Rome was placed on notice be ready to break up any disturbances that might be a threat to Roman peace.

Jesus is entering the city on an animal like a victorious king; it looks Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem, the city of God and is ready to ascend his rightful throne.

Jesus has mixed emotions during this Mardi Gras like occasion, riding the lead float in the tournament of Roses parade, Jesus knew that this **mayhem of fans**, would soon be a **mob of haters**, shouting crucify him, crucify him.

In Jesus Triumphant entry, the adoring crowd and followers is made up Lazarus, back from the dead, Mary who Jesus sent demons back to the grave, Blind Bart jumping, Martha

laughing, when Rome looks at this party unfolding all they see is a simple and single miracle working Galilean rabbi riding on baby donkey, with a borrowed blanket draped across the animal serving as a saddle.

Yes, there is victory! Yes, there is Triumphant celebration. All this on Palm Sunday, but none of it impresses Rome. And in a few days, it would not impress the Jews either.

So, at the trial of Jesus in front of Pilate, Pilate finds no reason to convict Jesus of any crime. Pilate finds him innocent, and so did many others.

Jesus is mocked. Jesus is ridiculed. Jesus is despised. Jesus is sentenced to death.

Yet it is Jesus' purity.

It is Jesus' innocence.

It is Jesus' holiness that dominates the scene of the trials.

In the midst of the cruel and evil activity of the Jewish and Roman trials it is the perfect lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world as John the Baptist describes him. Jewish sins and Roman sins are forgiven beginning at the trials and continuing to the cross.

Against the ugly and satanic darkness of the Jewish and Roman trials it is the perfection of the Son of God. Luke records 3 other witnesses beside Pilate announcing Jesus' innocence.

Luke recorded three other witnesses besides Pilate who declared Jesus as "not guilty." King Herod (Luke 23:15), the thief on the cross (Luke 23:41) and the Roman Centurion (Luke 23:47).

Paul tells us Jesus knew no sin. The writer of Hebrews, Jesus was without sin. Peter tells us, Jesus committed no sin. Like a perfect lamb used in the temple sacrifice, Jesus would be the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world.

That is the testimony to Jesus holy perfection. This perfection started at the beginning of Jesus incarnate life, continuing to the very end on the cross.

You see Jesus' perfection on display all through His Jewish and Roman trials.

The harder the Jews and Romans work to make Jesus a blasphemer, insurrectionist and a rebel, the more accusations they trump up, and heap on Jesus, and even the more they beat, slap, spit and abuse Jesus.... **The more majestic Jesus Christ is!**

The glory of Christ is seen, in contrast to the ugly and evil sin of a darkened heart. My heart, your heart.

Who was Herod Antipas? The son of Herod the Great. Like his father, he ruled with notorious cruelty.

Jesus grew up and carried out his ministry in the region of Herod's authority, the Galilee region. Pilate was not obligated to hand Jesus over to Herod but did so to free himself of the burden of finding Jesus guilty. When Pilate discovered Jesus was from Galilee, Pilate took advantage of a legal loophole which would get Jesus off his judicial calendar.

⁷ When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. (Luke 23-NIV)

This relationship between Pilate and Herod had a history of strained relationships. The enmity between Pilate and Herod, one Roman and one Jewish by religion, happened because some Galileans were slaughtered on Temple Mount by Pilate. (Luke 13)

Now there were some present on that occasion who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. (Luke 13:1-NET)

Pilate had them slaughtered but they lived in Herod's region of Galilee thus making it his responsibility to protect his citizens.

There are two options for where a criminal can be charged – in the province from where the accused came or in the province where the crime was committed.

Herod had heard many things about Jesus' life and ministry and had hoped to see Jesus pull a rabbit out his hat. He had hoped to see a miracle. Herod thought Jesus was a magician who could conjure up some miracles to authenticate his ministry.

⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. (Luke 23-NIV)

Because of Herod's inability to focus and his eagerness to meet Jesus, he began to flood Jesus with a series of rambling questions and remarks without letting Jesus respond. Not that he would have anyway.

Jesus did not answer Herod with so much a word. Even though Jesus knew Herod has been out to kill him for some time, Jesus stood motionless. Voiceless. And completely unimpressed with Herod.

³¹ At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." ³² He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'" (Luke 13-NIV)

This is the only time Jesus used a derogatory remark about a leader. As far as Herod was concerned, this trial was nothing but entertainment. What is sad, Herod had already killed Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, and now he will soon have more blood on his hands with the death of Jesus, too.

It is interesting to note that during John the Baptist 2-year imprisonment, Herod visited John many times in jail. *When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him. (Mark 6:20b-NIV)*

A conscience that wants to be awakened but will not put down his pride and arrogance to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the one true king, will have his conscience awakened on judgment day!

Jesus did not respond to Herod because words are wasted on people who have no interest in truth.

When Herod gets nowhere with Jesus, he shows his real colors and grabs one of his personal kingly robes and puts it on Jesus and sends him back to Pilate. **Herod Antipas became bored with Jesus and returned him to Pilate wearing one of Herod's royal robes.**

Herod was mocking Jesus by making him look like a candidate for kingship. Mocking Jesus as a pretender to the crown. To the throne. Let me end with some heart-felt suggestions:

Be thankful for God's gift of salvation.

It cost us nothing. It cost Jesus everything.

Are you beginning to see all that Jesus has done for YOU?

Joel is not going to come out onto the stage with a small baby lamb and use the following monologue. When he is done, he will direct us to worship as Bonnie leads in a song about Jesus the Lamb. Then Bonnie will place her hand on the lamb and pray over God's people.

Bonnie will give the dismissal. For those who want to see the monologue that Joel uses, here it is. I call it Lamb story:

Isn't this a sweet little lamb? God used the image of lambs in the bible to teach each of us, forgiveness of sins is available because blood has been spilt.

Yes, over the centuries the spilt blood from these sweet little animals have made it possible for evil and sinful people alike, to be reconciled to God. **Hurray**, for forgiveness of sins. **Oh, my** for the death of an innocent lamb.

I often get asked why God rejected Cain's sacrifice in Genesis and God accepted Abel's. First both offered their worship to God by means of a sacrifice. God looked with pleasure and delight on Abel's but rejected his brother Cain's. Again, why?

Answer: Cain was from the fruit of his field, but Abel's was from the flock of his herd. One included blood, the other did not.

The New Testament reminds us Jesus Christ is our Passover Lamb.

For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. (1 Corinthians 5:7B-NIV)

Since the days of Moses on Mt Sinai, God has forgiven a person's sins when a lamb was slaughtered for the sins of a family or person. Now, travel in time to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, it was the shedding of blood that became the bridge of reconciliation to a holy God.

He himself is the sacrifice that atones and cancels our sins, but not only our sins but the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

This small lamb that I am holding, innocent, loving has no malice, enters a Jewish family home for 4 days as a family pet and dies as a penalty for sin. The children sleep with it, name it and play with it.

Shortly thereafter, the dad will take the lamb and pray over it, position it and then slay it. The lamb screams. Death wins. Blood is spilt and sins can now be forgiven.

Now, this did not sit well at the Passover in Egypt with the Egyptians. Why? Because the Egyptians worshipped the lamb as a god.

Moses told the God's people the death of the lamb will provide freedom and deliverance from the slavery of sin.

Jesus not only bore our sins, but He also bore our shame by being trialed by the Jews and Romans. In the end forgiveness of sins is available to anyone who asks.

Let's sing thanking God for sins forgiven as we bring our sins to Christ as we worship and sing about Jesus our lamb.

I will be available at the **I Have Decided Wall**, after the service ends for all who want to pet the lamb. Bonnie will lead worship and then come and offer a final prayer as she puts her hand on the lamb.