



VOCARE

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A Trial Lawyer Looks at the Trials of Jesus

Since we are in Holy Week, I thought it would be a good time to change from the usual Vocare approach to share this presentation by John J. Jurcyk, Jr.

I. GENERAL PRELIMINARY REMARKS

- A. Approach: That of a lawyer, not a theologian.
- B. My Sources:
 - 1. The four New Testament Gospels. Gospels of Saints Matthew, Mark & Luke are similar. They are called Synoptic ('with one eye') gospels. The gospel of John is not synoptic. I tried to read the gospels (passages regarding trial) together in order to appreciate the trials.
 - a. Proximity: The various locations covering the trial are fairly close together.
 - b. I consider the Gospel account factual history. It is my view that a few people— the power structure— Jerusalem leaders, the temple elite were responsible for Jesus' death not *a people collectively*.
 - 2. Historically, Non-Christian Sources also establish a trial of Jesus.
 - a. Roman Tacitus First Century: Historian hostile to Christianity. "Christus (Jesus)... suffering the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate, and a most mischievous superstition . . .brought out not only in Judea . . . but even in Rome . . ." (Mischievous superstition here refers to Christianity).
 - b. Flavius Josepus - Jewish Historian. (*Wars of the Jews*, 2, 8, 12 and *Antiquities of The Jews* 20-9,1.) "About the same time there lived Jesus, a wise man for he was a performer of marvelous feats and a teacher of such men who received the truth with pleasure. He attracted many Jews and Greeks. He was called the Christ. Pilate sentenced him to die on the cross, having

been urged to do so by the noblest of our citizens. The Christians have not disappeared to this day."

II. CRIMINAL TRIAL SYSTEM & NORMS

A. USA Norms Regarding Criminal Trials.

1. Accused is innocent until proven guilty; presumption of innocence.
2. The burden of the government/state - the Prosecutor - is to prove the case against defendant beyond a reasonable doubt
3. The rights of the accused - to be accorded due process. Fair procedures are to be followed. No one is promised a perfect trial.
4. Defendant has the right to confront his accusers in open court.
5. Right to speedy trial. If not tried within a certain time, case may be dismissed.
6. Trial by jury of peers; jury selected through a screening process.
7. No self incrimination. 5th Amendment.
8. Public trial.
9. Furnished defense counsel (Oklahoma Bomber, first WTC trial).
10. Defendant to state: prove me guilty beyond a reasonable doubt!

I plan to discuss during the time of Jesus on earth the environment – Political, Religious, & Roman. We will discuss the Jewish legal system, Pontius Pilate and the three religious trials and the three civil trials.

B. The Jewish Legal System

1. The Great Sanhedrin—name *Sanhedrin* comes from the Greek *Asynedrion* meaning "sitting together."
 - a. Political Body
 - b. Highest assembly of Jewish Nation for Government of People.
 - c. Jewish Supreme Court and only the court with jurisdiction over death cases.
2. History and Function of Sanhedrin--This court was used under Rome to handle religious cases within the Jewish community that fell under the Law of Moses, in order to off-load as many cases as possible from the Roman courts. Jesus was brought before this court on the charge of blaspheming. The Sanhedrin could pronounce death sentences where execution was by stoning but had to have crucifixion ratified by the Roman governor (see John 18:31-32),

which in this case was Pontius Pilate. Under Jewish law, death penalty was carried out by stoning. Under Roman, it is crucifixion.

3. Sanhedrin Qualifications – Members appointed for life.
 - a. Over age 40 with experience of 3 offices
 - b. Unimpeachable integrity
 - c. Hebrew descent – both parents had to be Jewish.
 - e. Held in high esteem by others.
 - f. Knowledgeable of Mosaic Code and Jewish tradition.
4. Makeup of the Great Sanhedrin–The Great Sanhedrin consisted of the high priest and former high priests in addition to members of the high priests= families, elders, Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees.
 - a. Seventy-two (72) members.
 - b. High priest - presiding judge - originally elected by all people. Later office bought from Roman governor.
 - c. Religious chamber - 24 chief priests - Pharisees and Sadducees.
 - d. Law chamber - 24 scribes - wrote out laws - knew law.
 - e. Popular chamber 24 elders – businessmen.
5. Law and Trial Procedure Under Jewish Law – these are items to keep in mind about Jewish Law as found in the *Talmud* – a book of Jewish law and commentary.
 - a. Sanhedrin acted as judge and jury.
 - b. No prosecutor except witnesses
 - c. No arrest for capitol crime at night - no night court, no lights. Death cases tried in day time.
 - d. When a person is arrested for a capitol crime it meant that no one cooperating in arrest could be connected with accused. An arrest on information of a follower was not legal. Because if accused is guilty, so are the followers of the accused. (Cf Judas)
 - e. Conviction in death cases had to be based on testimony of at least two witnesses who were separately examined. If only one witnesses accused the defendant, then accused is acquitted, ruled not guilty. Both witnesses had to agree – if in conflict, not guilty.
 - e. Accused had a right to employ a defense attorney (But see Gideon case USA).
 - f. Under Mosaic Law, accused could not be required to testify against himself. (5th Amendment).

- g. A Voluntary confession alone not competent for conviction under Jewish Law; 2 witnesses required. C.E. U.S. Miranda - confession freely given.
- h. Jewish Law - no circumstantial evidence.
- i. No hearsay - U.S. - Exceptions.
- j. Presumed innocent - CF U.S.A.
- k. No evidence presented unless accused present. (US. - confront witness). Evidence of innocence of the accused is presented before the evidence of guilt is presented.
- l. If member of Sandhedrin had an interest or relationship to accused, he was disqualified. Could not benefit.
- m. Jewish - No oath. The 8th Commandment regarding bearing false witness was thought sufficient to deter lying.
- n. Witnesses had to view the execution.
- o. False witnesses were subject to the penalty of the crime charged to the defendant.
- p. Ruling on what is presented in trial
- q. Sanhedrin under Rabbinic Law had a duty to defend accused.
- 6. Sanhedrin Trial Procedure.
 - a. Following the hearing, one Judge gives a summary of evidence. A majority of only one member was needed for acquittal. But a majority of at least two was needed for conviction. No hung jury.
 - b. If guilty no public announcement. Adjourn for day. Judges go home - think case over and return next day to ballot. Second vote next day - guilty votes could change to acquittal. Acquittal vote could not be changed. Voted individually youngest first. High Priest voted last. (Cf. U.S. Supreme Court voting). No appeal.
 - c. If there was unanimous guilty decision, then accused is discharged. Legal Fiction because someone did not do duty to protect accused, felt it was conspiracy and accused had no friend or defender. Thereafter, verdict is invalid and an acquittal ordered.
 - d. Court days - Monday - Thursday. Never on the Sabbath or feast days. Capital cases to last two consecutive days so no trial which would continue to Sabbath. Capital case not to be tried in one setting. Carried over second day. Case not continued for more than one day. So no trial would start on Sabbath ever.
 - e. In Jewish Law, there was a strong theme/concept that the Judge's actions were under the direct influence of God. The

debate before voting was time spent trying to find a reason for acquittal.

- f. During trial, no one was to strike accused.

III. PILATE

A. Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea and Samaria 26-36 A.D. He was needed to ratify the Sanhedrin's death sentence verdicts.

1. Philo of Alexandria AD 25-50 said Pilate had very little respect for the Jews and their religious traditions. On several occasions he had brought his troops up from Caesarea into Jerusalem, and had put their Roman shields and standards, which were engraved with images of Roman gods and goddesses, in the temple itself. That caused the Jews to riot, and each time the Jews rioted, Pilate would back down.
2. The Jews knew that Pilate was in trouble politically with the Emperor Tiberius and the house of Herod, and religiously with the Jewish leadership and the people. He hated the Jews, but he feared for his political life, so he was at their mercy; and the Jews knew it. They had figured out how to manipulate him. And here it was the Passover, with thousands of Jews from around the world in Jerusalem, and he needed to be in Jerusalem with his troops to keep law and order, the Jews were restless once again.

IV. SOME PRELIMINARY EVENTS LEADING UP TO JESUS' TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION.

- A. Pilate's political situation, particularly his perilous relationship with the Emperor and the history of riots and conflicts with the Jews who were, as I just mentioned, amassed in Jerusalem for the Passover sets the background for the Roman trials.
- B. To better understand the accusations at Jesus' 3 religious trials, it is helpful to look at some significant events that preceded Jesus' arrest. Overall, Jesus' teachings had made the Jewish power structure uncomfortable. They were worried about zealots and Rome crushing them. And there were these incidents in particular.

1. Raising of Lazarus--After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, some of the Jews went to the Pharisees and reported what Jesus had done. The Chief Priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. They asked what do we do? If Jesus is allowed to go on unchecked, everyone will believe and follow him, and the Romans will come and destroy the holy place and our nation. The Sanhedrin was made up of Pharisees - who wanted to follow every detail of the

law - and Sadducees who were political and were wealthy and aristocratic and kept their wealth by collaborating with Rome. All the priests were Sadducees. They were worried about this position. They feared Jesus might gain a following and raise a disturbance which Rome would descend on them with all her power and the Sadducees would be out.

Caiaphas makes a statement that "You don't seem to have grasped the situation at all. Can you not see it is better to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed?" From that day onward, Jesus was to die for the nation and they were ordered to kill him. (John 11:45, 55)

2. **The Triumphant Entry Into Jerusalem**--All four gospels write of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem as the prophesied Messiah. Christians commemorate this event on Palm Sunday. Jesus is popularly proclaimed by the people to be the Messiah who would restore Israel to its former glory during the time of King David:

The Gospel describes the welcome: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is coming! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mark 11:10; Luke 2:13-14). Matthew: "And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil." (Matthew 21:10)

3. **The Purging at the Temple**--All three of the synoptic gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) depict Jesus' arrest as occurring only a matter of days after his purging at the Temple. Jesus is said to have been angry at arriving at the Temple only to find that the money changers and traders had corrupted it. Jesus threw out the money changers and sellers of animals. Some commentators suggest Annas, former Chief Priest, was in charge of the money traders and sellers of animals.

- a. According to Mark, Jesus says: **"Does not scripture say: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples'? But you have turned it into a robbers den."** (Mark 11:17, see also John 2:15-17).

- b. The purging at the Temple went a step beyond mere prophesying the Temple's destruction. **"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."** (John 2:19-20) These statements were likely perceived by the Sadducees/Roman authorities as ones made by Zealots who were stirring up the people into possible revolutionary activity against Rome. The gospels tell how when **"the chief priests and the scribes heard [of the cleansing of the Temple] they sought a way to destroy [Jesus]; for they feared him, because the entire multitude was astonished at his teaching."** (Mark 11:18-19).

4. **Passover in Jerusalem—**

a. John's account of the days leading up to the Passover describes "country people" discussing whether Jesus will come to Jerusalem. The Chief Priest had given orders that anyone who knew where Jesus was must inform them so they could arrest him.

b. Jesus came to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, the most important Jewish festival. It was the duty of every pious Jew, beginning at age twelve, to observe Passover "in the place where the Lord shall choose" (Deuteronomy 16:2). The historian Josephus wrote that millions (he estimated three million people one year - obviously an exaggeration) of observant Jews thronged into Jerusalem during the week of Passover. The Romans typically reinforced their stationed troops during this time, to handle any riots that might take place.

V. RELIGIOUS TRIALS OF JESUS

A. First Religious Trial--Trial of Jesus in Annas' House.

About 2:00 a.m.

1. Jesus in Garden of Gethsemane. Late Thursday/Early Friday - It is night. Judas having been bribed by the Temple elite arrives with band (600 + men). Jesus is arrested. Passover crowd not in street. Band had torches and weapons, in case Jesus tried to escape. They bound him and delivered him to the high priest.
2. Jesus was brought bound from Gethsemane to Annas' house. Annas was a former high priest (6-15 A.D.) who therefore had legal standing. Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the High Priest that year (John 18:12-13). Annas had been deposed as High Priest by the Romans (A.D. 15), and had been succeeded by Caiaphas, but Annas still wielded great influence among the priestly families. A legal religious trial had to be held in the daytime and in front of the Sanhedrin, but probably there were some members of the Sanhedrin in Annas' house, and they gave the go ahead signal to execute Jesus.
3. Even though there was no charge against Jesus, Annas questioned Jesus about his disciples and teaching. Jesus answered (John 18:20-23) "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple where all the Jews gather, and in secret I have said nothing. Why do thou question me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; behold, these know what I have said." Jesus' suggestion that the Sanhedrin question witnesses, not him (remember, he was NOT supposed to accuse himself or confess) was consistent with the law Annas was to uphold. But when Jesus

spoke this truth, a Temple guard hit him saying, "Is that the way thou dost answer the high priest?" Jesus replied, "If I have spoken ill, bear witness to me evil, but if well, why dost thou strike me? "

Jesus knew the law: No one person was to question the accused. Additionally, Jesus was not required to speak—he could stand mute, but tradition of the Sanhedrin was required that his innocence be discussed first. Additionally, remember, there were to be no blows to the accused. It is also night and trials were prohibited at that time. In disregard for the code of law and the violations of justice continue, Annas sends Jesus bound to Caiaphas (John 18:19).

4.

B. Second Religious Trial --Jesus in the Palace of Caiaphas.

About 3:30 a.m.

1. Jesus was taken, bound, from Annas to the Palace of Caiaphas, the High Priest (John 18:24). Here, some of the teachers of the Law and the Jewish authorities were assembled (Matthew 27:57). The group was looking for some kind of charge. However, the 72 members of the Council of the Sanhedrin could not legally hold a session during the night, so they had to have a little patience until the morning for the "legal" religious formal trial. You will recall that Caiaphas had said it is better for one man to die for the people.
2. At the palace of Caiaphas the temple elite needed some evidence against Jesus to put him to death; however, they were unable to find any. Eventually they got two persons to say that Jesus had said: I have power to destroy the Temple of God and in three days build it up." Jesus remained silent. Finally, the High priest said to Jesus: "I put you on oath by the living God, to tell us: If you are the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God?" Jesus answered: "It is you who say that I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven." (Matthew 26: 60-64). At that the high Priest tore his garments (under *Talmud* when moderator hears blasphemous word, he is to disagree publicly by tearing the garment) and said: "What need of witnesses have we now? You heard the blasphemy. What is your finding? And they all gave their verdict: he deserved to die." (Matthew 26:59-66, Mark 14:61-64). The Sanhedrin heard what in their minds constituted blaspheming God, a crime punishable by death under the Jewish law.
3. The priests got their charge of blasphemy, but a number of illegal irregularities occurred:
 - a. No separate vote.
 - b. No witness.

- c. No debate / coming together
 - d. No adjournment next day; 3 day period before execution
 - e. A unanimous decision.
 - f. Trial on Feast Day
 - g. No individual vote/ no dissent.
 - h. A confession.
 - i. Occurred in an illegal place at Caiaphas Palace, should have been at council chamber in the Temple
 - j. Did not take place during daylight.
 - k. And keep in mind no mention of Sedition/Treason – the charge that will later be used to bring about the Roman death penalty.
4. Mockery of Jesus--Immediately after the condemnation, "some of them started spitting at him and, blindfolding him, began hitting him with their fists and shouting, '**plays the Prophet!**' and the attendants rained blows on him." (Mark 14:65)
- Luke 22:66-71; March 14:53 The Sanhedrin was the one to give the religious sentence to Jesus, but it was illegal for the 70 members of the Sanhedrin to meet at night, so Jesus had to wait until morning with the soldiers abusing him all night.

C. Third Religious Trial of Jesus – Sanhedrin – In Council Chamber 6 a.m. daylight.

Luke 22:66- "And as soon as day broke, the elders of the people and the chief priests and Scribes gathered together; and they led him away to the Sanhedrin. They questioned Jesus 'If thou art the Christ, tell us.' And he said to them, 'If I tell you, you will not believe me and if I question you, you will not answer me, or let me go. But henceforth, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.' And they said, 'Art thou then the Son of God?' He answered, 'You yourselves say that I am.' And they said 'What further need have we of witness? For we have heard it ourselves from his own mouth?'" Of course, if they had followed their law and tradition, they would have known the need for further witnesses, but it was not to be for "the whole assemblage rose and took him before Pilate." And so begin the three civil trials of Jesus.

V. CIVIL TRIALS OF JESUS.

A. First Civil Trial (Roman Code) --Jesus to Pilate:

About 6:30 - 7:00 a.m.

1. Again, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus to death, but death by crucifixion had to be ratified by the Roman authority, in this case, Pilate, the Roman Governor.

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2. Pilate's headquarters were at coastal Caesarea, but he came to Jerusalem on Jewish feasts because of the danger of uprisings. His praetorium or palace in Jerusalem was part of the Tower of Antonia, next to the Temple area, in the present Via Dolorosa.

3. The Accusations: (Charge - information, indictment)

a. Pilate comes out to meet the Sanhedrin who have Jesus bound saying "What charge do you bring against this man?" They replied: "If He were not a criminal, we should not be handing over to you." Pilate said: "Take him yourselves and try him by your law." They answered: "We are not allowed to put a man to death." John 18: 25-30.

b. **LUKE STATES:**

"The whole council of the Sanhedrin rose and brought Jesus to Pilate. They gave their accusations:

"We found this man: subverting our nation, opposing payments of taxes to Caesar, and Claiming to be Christ the King." (Luke 23:1-2).

4. Now the Sanhedrin did not charge Jesus before Pilate of "the blasphemy of making himself God," but to impress and convince Pilate, they submitted new political charges, including treason. Under Roman law, death was the penalty for treason.

[Query: Jesus did not subvert the nation against the Romans. He is falsely accused as forbidding to pay the taxes to Caesar, when in fact Jesus said the opposite! Scripture states Jesus said "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's."]

5. [The charge of making himself a "king," a rival to Caesar, is strange when one considers the very reason why the High Priests rejected Jesus was because he did not offer to do anything against Caesar. The charges had a ring of insurrection. (NOTE: Jesus had declined to be temporal King. (John 6:15).]

6. **Jesus as King: Pilate goes into Praetorium and brings Jesus.**

Pilate asked Jesus: **"Are you the King of the Jews?"** Jesus asked Pilate, **"Do you ask this of your own accord, or have others spoken to you about me?"** [In other words, 'Is Rome accusing me of treason, or the Jews?'] Pilate answered, **"Am I a Jew? It is your own people and the chief priests who have handed you over to me; what have you done?"** (Pilate is saying, 'What do I care about Jewish Law?'). John 18: 33-36.

7. In John 18:36 and 37, Jesus explained to Pilate that indeed he was a king but not in any political sense; he was a king in a real spiritual sense over all those who paid homage to the truth, changing human hearts and building a kingdom within. He said **"Mine is not a kingdom of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my men would have fought to prevent**

me being surrendered up to the Jews; but my kingdom is not of this kind." Pilate therefore said to him, "So you are a king then?" Jesus answered; "It is you who say it. Yes, I am a king. I was born for this; I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice." Pilate said to him, "Truth? What is that?" (John 18:35-39) ['What is your truth to me?']

8. **The First Verdict of Pilate.** Pilate said to the Temple Elite - Not guilty... "I find no crime in this man," "I find no case against him," "and no crime deserving death has been proved." But the Priests keep repeating and pressing charges of stirring up unrest in Jerusalem and Galilee. (John 18:38, 19:6, Luke 23:4, 14, 22).

B. Second civil trial--Jesus to Herod: (In Luke only) (circa 730 AD)

1. Jesus was a Galilean and when Pilate learned that, he thought he had his solution—let Herod deal with Jesus who was allegedly stirring up people in Galilee. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod next. Herod had jurisdiction over Galilee and was in Jerusalem at the time. Jesus trial before Herod is found only in the Gospel of Luke 23:6-12.
2. Herod Antipas beheaded John the Baptist. Herod is a repugnant figure in the Bible. Herod Antipas was Caesar's spy. Herod could report to Rome some injustice or undue cruelty of Pilate. Some suggest Pilate sent Jesus to Herod so Herod could not criticize Pilate.
3. Herod Antipas had heard of Jesus and was hoping to see Jesus work some miracle. Imagine it: Herod gives Jesus a cup of water and asks Jesus to convert it into wine, and nothing, it remains water!... so, he gives Jesus two loafs of bread, and asks Jesus to multiply them just to ten, and nothing happens! . . . Herod was totally disappointed.
4. The chief priests and the scribes remained standing at Herod's court, vehemently pressing their accusations. . . Jesus did not say a word to Herod, but the verdict of Herod was "not guilty," just a madman . . . so Herod ridiculed Jesus and with his guards mocked him. Herod also did not want to be involved in another execution of a holy person. He felt Jesus was insane, put a rich cloak on him, and sent him back to Pilate. Pilate and Herod, who had been enemies, were reconciled that day. (Luke 22:8-12).

C. Third Civil (Roman) Trial--Jesus again to Pilate (About 8 a.m.)

1. The temple elite were vehemently pressing different charges, and Jesus was silent. Pilate interrogated Jesus again, and his verdict was again "not guilty", now more clearly than ever.
2. Pilate then summoned the Chief Priests and the leading men of the people and said "You brought this man before me as a political agitator. Now I have gone into the matter myself in your presence and found no case

against the man in respect of all the charges you bring against him, nor has Herod either since he has sent him back to us. As you can see, the man has done nothing that deserves death." Luke 23: 13-16

a. Now Pilate appeals to their sentiments: "What should I do with the man you call King of the Jews?" The crowd shouted back, "Crucify him!" "What evil has he done?" But they shouted the louder, "Crucify him!" (Mark 15:12-14).

b. Pilate did not want to find Jesus guilty, so he tries, a last hope: the appeal to pathos to save Jesus from death.

3. He says he will "have him flogged and release him." (Luke 23: 16). Roman scourging or flogging consisted of 39 lashes. Pilate wants to release the innocent Jesus, but he wants to keep the peace of the Temple Elite. So, he starts looking for a political compromise: Pilate offered the Jerusalem leaders a choice: To release Jesus or the murderer Barabbas. Because every Passover festival Pilate used to free any prisoner the people asked for. The crowd chooses Barabbas! (Mark 15:6-11).

4. So the Scouring and the Crown of Thorns:

a. The Place of the Scouring & the Crowning of Thorns: Today, in Jerusalem, there is one of the few places with a floor where Jesus is said actually to have walked on. It is in the Convent of the Sisters of Zion (the Dames de Sion) near the site of the Antonia Fortress, next to the Temple: A flight of stairs leads down to the site of the *Lithostratos* which, in the Gospels is described as being opposite the *Praetorium* (Mark 15:16, John 19:13). The floor is marked for some of the games the Roman soldiers used to play. One of these can be identified by the letter "B," which stands for the Greek word *Basileus* (King) or "the game of the King." Here is where the soldiers scourged Jesus and crowned him with thorns, playing the game of the King.

b. John's description of the Scouring and Crowning

"Pilate then had Jesus taken away and scourged"

John 19:1-7: "The soldiers twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on his head and dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him and saying, "Hail, king of the Jews," and they slapped him in the face.

5. The last accusation and the last time Jesus stands with Pilate is after He is scourged and crowned with thorns.

Pilate went outside again and said to the crowd: "Look, I am going to bring him out to you to let you see that I find no case against him." Jesus came out, scourged, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe and Pilate

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said, "Behold the man!" (*Ecce Homo!*) Pilate made an appeal to the sympathy of the crowd - "Just look at the pathetic man standing here beaten and bleeding, isn't this enough?" But rather than have pity, the Chief Priests insist they want Barabbas and when asked by Pilate what he should do with Jesus, they shouted, "Crucify him!, Crucify him!" (John 19:1-7) (Luke 22:13-6).

Pilate tries again to convince the Jerusalem leaders. (John 19:6-16): When Pilate told the High Priests he found no guilt in him they replied "He ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God." (John 19:7-8) **This is the last accusation of the Sanhedrin: "he made himself Son of God,"** and when Pilate heard this he was more afraid, so he went back to interrogate Jesus again "Where do you come from?" (What is the secret of your origin? Who are you? Not a local.) But Jesus kept silent. Then Pilate said to him: "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you just as I have power to crucify you?" Jesus replied: "You would have no power over me if it had not been given to you from above; that is why the one who handed me over to you has the greater guilt." From that moment Pilate was looking for a way to set him free. [Pilate brought Jesus to the judgment seat, at a place called Lithostrotos, and said, "Here is your King" but they cried out "Crucify him!" Pilate replied, "Shall I crucify your king?" and they answered, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:7-15). Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.

6. The Crucifixion Sentence:

a. Jesus was found guilty by the Sanhedrin in a procedure that violated all their rules of evidence and procedure. The charges were changed from blasphemy to treason. Herod and Pilate found Jesus not guilty. But in the end, Pilate despite several not guilty statements caved to his fear of civil unrest and turned Jesus over to be crucified. Pilate never said Jesus was guilty as charged (John 19:11).

b. St. Matthew (27:24-26) describes the crucifixion sentence: "Then Pilate, seeing that he was doing no good, but rather that a riot was about to break out, took water and washed his hands in sight of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man." Then Pilate freed Barabbas and handed Jesus over to be crucified.

SUMMARY

Looking at the record - the four gospels and Jewish Law, it is clear that the trials - religious and civil - were irregular and as an American Appellate Court would say today, fraught with reversible error.

Two of the most enlightened systems of law that ever existed were prostituted to destroy the most innocent man who ever lived.

The trial of Jesus suggests from a secular view that all men and women of good faith should work for a system of human government whereby we may live in peace and safety under a Rule of Law administered with respect for truth, justice, and compassion.

In conclusion, the arrest, religious trials, and civil trials of Jesus from this lawyer's viewpoint, were not fair and just under religious law and Roman law, but Jesus bore this to redeem us.

**THE TRIALS OF JESUS CHRIST
FROM A LAWYER'S STANDPOINT**

PRESENTATION

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TRIAL	SCRIPTURE	JUDGE	DECISION
<u>Religious Jewish Trials</u>			
First	John 18:12-14	Annas	Signal given to execute Jesus
Second	Matthew 26:57-58	Caiaphas	Death sentence, Charge of blasphemy
Third	Matthew 27:1-2	Sanhedrin	Death sentence "made legal"
<u>Civil Roman Trials</u>			
First	John 18:28-38	Pilate	Not guilty
Second	Luke 23:6-12	Herod	Not guilty
Third	John 18:39, 19:6	Pilate	Not guilty, but turned over for crucifixion

Matthew 26 & Mark 14 show a trial of Jesus before Caiaphas at night.

Mark 15:1 mentions a meeting in the morning with the high priests and elders, but no trial is mentioned.

Luke is silent about the night trial and shows the morning trial before the Sanhedrin (Luke 22:66-71).

Though the plan of God was for Jesus to be crucified for us, it is heart-breaking to realize all of the injustice and prejudice He suffered for us. In the words of a much-loved hymn:

*He could have called ten thousand angels,
to destroy the world and set Him free.*

*He could have called ten thousand angels,
But He died alone, for you and me.*

The late **John J. Jurcyk, Jr.**, an esteemed trial lawyer and Serran in Kansas City, Kansas, once presented **his professional examination of the trials of Jesus** to an audience at the Wyandotte County Museum in 2015.

As Lent draws to a close, we share with you his presentation notes, which outline **his view of the legal processing of Jesus' case by contemporary and historical legal and cultural standards.**

John was an active leader at the USA Council level as a committee chairman and vice president. He was called to heaven on Dec. 29, 2018.