

# The Hebrew Trials of Christ

The arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane took place soon after midnight of the 14th day of Nisan, according to the Hebrew calendar, or on April 7, according to Roman time. The Hebrews began their day at sunset and the Romans at midnight. We have reason to believe that the men who arrested Jesus were part of the temple guard, a Roman military detachment that policed the temple grounds because Jewish riots often started in that area. As the arrest took place, Jesus told Peter that He could call for "twelve legions" of angels to help Him. A Roman legion averaged 6,000 men, and some contained 9,000. Between 75,000 and 100,000 mighty angels "that excel in strength" would, at the request of Christ, have come to help Him.

## The Arrest of Jesus

According to Hebrew law, the arrest of Jesus was illegal on four separate counts. (1) All legal proceedings, including arrests, were forbidden at night. It was a well-established and inflexible rule of Hebrew law that arrests and trials leading to capital punishment [death], could not occur at night. Dupin the famous French lawyer explicitly states that the trial of Jesus was illegal, but the arrest was also, because both were held at night (*Walter M. Chandler, The Trial of Jesus, volume 1, pages 226-227*).

(2) The use of a traitor, and thus an accomplice, in effecting an arrest or securing a conviction was forbidden by Hebrew law. "*Turning state's evidence*" was illegal in Hebrew jurisprudence (*Leviticus 19:16-18*). "The testimony of an accomplice is not permissible by rabbinic law, . . . and no man's life, nor his liberty, nor his reputation can be endangered by the malice of one who has confessed himself a criminal" or accomplice of the one judged--*S. Mendelsohn, The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews, page 274*.

"The ancient Hebrews forbade the use of accomplice testimony . . . The arrest of Jesus was ordered upon the supposition that He was a criminal: this same supposition would have made Judas, who had aided, encouraged, and abetted Jesus in the propagation of His faith, an accomplice. If Judas was not an accomplice, Jesus was innocent, and His arrest an outrage, and therefore illegal. --*Chandler, The Trial of Jesus, vol. 1, pp. 228 -229*.

(3) The arrest was not the result of a legal summons. "His capture was not the result of a legal mandate from a court whose intentions were to conduct a legal trial for the purpose of reaching a righteous judgment." -- *Chandler, vol. 2, p. 237*. "This arrest . . . was the execution of an illegal and factious resolution of the Sanhedrin . . . There was no idea of apprehending a citizen in order to try him upon a charge which after sincere and regular judgment might be found just or unfounded; the intention was simply to seize a man and do away with him." --*Giovanni Rosadi, The Trial of Jesus, p. 114*.

(4) According to Hebrew law it was illegal to bind an uncondemned man. (*John 18:12-13*). Thus, in connection with the midnight arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane, there took place the first four of a series of more than a score of illegal acts that made the entire proceeding the greatest travesty on justice in all the annals of mankind.

## The Preliminary Hearings

Jesus, after being securely bound by the temple guard in Gethsemane, was taken to the palace of Annas. Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, had been appointed high priest by the Roman legate Quirinus in the year 6 A.D. Seven years later he was discharged from his high office by the Roman procurator Valerius Gratus for imposing and executing capital sentences which had been forbidden by the imperial government. Although he was now only an ex-high priest, he was still the most powerful man in the affairs of the Jews, He still presided over the Sanhedrin at times, and practically dictated its decisions. The office of high priest remained in his family for fifty years. Josephus, the historian tells us that Annas was "haughty, audacious,

and cruel." At the time Jesus was brought before him, Annas may have been president of the Sanhedrin; that position was not always held by the high priest. The Sanhedrin was the Jewish supreme court in the time of Jesus. It was also called "*the Council of Seventy*."

Jesus was examined by two preliminary hearings before being tried before the supreme Jewish tribunal, the Sanhedrin. The first was before Annas, and took place shortly after midnight. This was followed by another before Caiaphas, who was probably seated with a few members of the Sanhedrin who, with him and Annas, considered themselves bitter enemies of Jesus. In these hearings Jesus was closely questioned regarding His disciples and His teachings. John 18:19-24 probably gives the questioning before Annas. It was hoped that Jesus would make some statement on which an indictment could be based, charging Him with blasphemy against God, or sedition against the government, or both.

*This was the first of a series of six trials constituting the world's master judicial burlesque or travesty on justice. Jesus was condemned by two separate tribunals, one Hebrew and the other Roman. Each of the two court trials was divided into three parts, the first trial being Christ's hearings before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin. The second trial was before Pilate, Herod, and Pilate again. In the preliminary hearings before Annas and Caiaphas it was hoped that Jesus would incriminate Himself, and thus furnish evidence which would convict Him before the Jewish tribunal.*

After appearing before Annas, Jesus was led away to a hearing before Caiaphas (*Matthew 26:57*). Only John mentions the first hearing before Annas (*John 18:13-14, 24*). It is estimated that Jesus was brought before Caiaphas at about 2 a. m. Joseph Caiaphas had been appointed to the office of high priest by Valerius Gratus in the year 18 A.D. He remained high priest for many years, the longest of any of the family of Annas. The name "*Caiaphas*" means "*the oppressor*," and Rosadi declares that "his intellectual caliber was below mediocrity," and that the power he wielded was only nominal--Annas was the real power behind the priesthood in those days. Caiaphas was deposed by Vitellius after the fall of Pilate in 36 A.D.

*The preliminary hearings before Annas and Caiaphas were illegal on four separate counts. (1) They were a violation of the rule of law that forbade all proceedings by night. M. Dupin, the French advocate, in speaking of these hearings said: "Now the Jewish law prohibited all proceedings by night; [this] therefore, was another infraction of the law."*

(2) Hebrew law prohibited a judge or a magistrate, sitting alone, from questioning an accused person judicially, or to sit in judgment on his legal rights, either by day or by night. No one-judge courts were allowed--their smallest sessions had three and their largest, seventy-one judges. "Be not a sole judge, for there is no sole judge but One [God]."--*a well-known saying in the Jewish Mishna*. It was believed that God alone was capable of judging without counsel.

(3) Private preliminary hearings--no matter how many judges were present--were specifically forbidden by Jewish law. "A principle perpetually reproduced in the Hebrew Scriptures relates to the two conditions of publicity and liberty. An accused man was never subjected to private or secret examination, lest, in his perplexity, he furnish damaging testimony against himself." --*Joseph Salvador, Histoire des Institutions de Moise, p. 365-366*. It was to obtain such evidence that Jesus was questioned in these two preliminary hearings. Although many modern countries have such preliminary hearings to decide if the accused should be tried, no such rule was known in Hebrew law.

(4) The striking of Jesus by the officer during the hearing before Annas (*John 18:22*) was "an act of brutality which Hebrew jurisprudence did not tolerate . . . It was an outrage upon the Hebrew sense of justice and humanity which in its normal state was very pure and lofty." --*Chandler, vol. 1, p. 245*. In His reply to the smiter (*John 18:23*), "Jesus planted Himself squarely upon His legal rights as a Jewish citizen. It was in every word [that He there spoke] the voice of pure Hebrew justice."--*Chandler, Vol. 1, p. 246*. Such an act--a court officer striking a defendant in a court trial--would be illegal in any court in the world. Christ was acting within His legal rights when He refused to answer the questions of the high priest. His statement was an appeal for the legal testimony of witnesses.

Annas and Caiaphas lived virtually under the same roof in the palace of the high priest with only a courtyard between their residences. It was in this courtyard that the rabble awaited the outcome of the hearings before

Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin. A maid, one of the servants of the palace, kept the door of the courtyard. She it was who admitted John and Peter. It was there that Peter later was to deny his Lord before a rooster began his early-morning crowing. (*John 18:15-18, Luke 22:54-62*).

## The Trial before the Sanhedrin

We witness many illegal incidents in this trial of Jesus before the Jewish high court, the Sanhedrin. (1) Hebrew law demanded two sessions of the Sanhedrin in case of condemnation, to be held a day apart. In the case of a capital [death sentence] trial, sentence could not be pronounced until the afternoon of the second day. The Hebrew trial of Jesus was thus illegal for it was concluded within one day; the entire proceedings taking place the fourteenth of Nisan, the first lunar month of the Jewish year. Here is what the law says: "In pecuniary [money fines] cases a trial may end the same day it began. In capital [death sentence] cases acquittal [declaring innocent] may be pronounced the same day, but the pronouncing of sentence of death must be deferred until the following day in the hope that some argument may meanwhile be discovered in favor of the accused"--*Mishna, sect. 8, "Sanhedrin," p. 32 (and also found in sect. 4, p. 1)*.

It is evident from Mark 14:53 and 15:1 and other passages that there were two separate sessions of the Sanhedrin, and that they were both held the same night.

The first was held very early in the morning before daylight, with only a portion of the members present, probably a quorum composed of the bitterest enemies of Jesus. With Caiaphas they had been up all night in their concern to do away with this Man whom they so much hated. The second session was held at break of day with "the elders and scribes and the whole council" present. The morning session was probably an attempt to give a semblance of legality to the proceedings to make them conform to the Hebrew law requiring at least two trials. But being held the same day and only a few hours apart, they were nothing more than a subterfuge.

*Repeatedly, these men trampled upon Hebrew law in their effort to destroy Jesus, and the few pretenses of legality that they did observe were due to the fact that their examinations would be followed by a Roman court hearing.*

(2) The fact that the first of these trials was a night trial invalidated both, and was itself illegal. Like the Romans (and most modern civilizations), the Jews prohibited all legal proceedings by night. Night trials would encourage secret sessions which were forbidden. All who wished should be able to attend it, for someone might have testimony or evidence in favor of the defendant. Also it is well-known that men do not think well and make wise decisions at night. It is unfortunate that today many churches hold night meetings to decide legal matters, when the courts of the land refuse to do so.

In the Hebrew system, "criminal cases can be acted upon by the various courts during daytime only, by *Lesser Synhedrions* from the close of the morning service till noon, and by the *Greater Synhedrion* till evening."--*Mendelsohn, The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews, p. 112*. "Let a capital offense be tried during the day, but suspend it at night."--from the Mishna. Maimonides, a famous Jewish writer of many centuries ago, explained the reason for this: "The reason why the trial of a capital offense could not be held at night is because, as oral tradition says, the examination of such a charge is like diagnosing of a wound--in either case a more thorough and searching examination can be made by daylight."--*Maimonides, "Sanhedrin," III*.

(3) The Hebrew trial and condemnation of Jesus was illegal because it took place before the morning sacrifice. "The Sanhedrin sat from the close of the morning sacrifice to the time of the evening sacrifice."--*Talmud, Jerus., "Sanhedrin," C.I. fol. 19*. "No session of court could take place before the offering of the morning sacrifice."--*M.M. Lemann, Jesus Before the Sanhedrin, p. 109*. "Since the morning sacrifice was offered at the dawn of day, it was hardly possible for the Sanhedrin to assemble until the hour after that time."--*Mishna, "Tamid, or of the Perpetual Sacrifice," C. III*. The reason for this rule of Hebrew law was that no man was considered competent to act as a judge in any question--capitol or otherwise--until sacrifice and prayers had been offered to the great Judge of heaven. The Hebrew trials of Jesus were entirely over soon after the break of day, and hence before the morning sacrifice.

(4,5) The trial of Jesus was illegal because it was held on the day before the Seventh-day Sabbath,--and it was also held the day before a Jewish ceremonial holy-day--the Passover. Hebrew courts were not permitted to meet on the weekly Seventh-day Sabbath nor on the day before it occurred. In addition, court trials were not permitted on a festival or ceremonial sabbath, such as the Passover, nor on the day before it took place. The trial of Jesus occurred on the day before both the weekly Sabbath and the Yearly Passover, which was a ceremonial sabbath. Therefore, for both of these reasons, the trial of Jesus was unlawful by Jewish law. "Court must not be held on the Sabbath, or on any holy day"--is the Talmudic law in the matter. And of course, the trial of a capital punishment case could not be commenced on the day before the Seventh-day Sabbath or before a ceremonial sabbath, because in case of conviction there must be a second trial the following day--on the Sabbath or on the holy-day. "They shall not judge on the eve of the Sabbath, nor on that of any festival."--*Mishna, "Sanhedrin," IV, 1*. "No court of justice in Israel was permitted to hold sessions on the Sabbath or any of the seven Biblical holidays [see *Leviticus 23*]. In cases of capital crime, no trial could be commenced on Friday or the day previous to any holiday, because it was not lawful either to adjourn such cases longer than overnight, or to continue them on the Sabbath or holiday."--*Rabbi Wise, The Martyrdom of Jesus, p. 67*. The trial and execution of Jesus was not only on the day of the "preparation" of the weekly Sabbath, but also the day preceding the Passover sabbath. Because the Passover sabbath and the Seventh-day Sabbath came together on that particular year, the day was considered by the Jews to be a "double sabbath" or a "high day" (*John 19:31*). In a double sense the proceedings against Jesus were thus illegal.

(6) During the hour or two between the two Sanhedrin court trials, the Jewish leaders permitted the rabble to spit upon, torment and persecute Jesus, the Uncondemned. (*Mark 14:65, Luke 22:63-65* and the Old Testament prophecies of this: *Psalms 18:4, 69:12, Isaiah 50:6*). The laws of most nations presume a person to be innocent until he is proven guilty, and prior to a final sentence of condemnation, he is entitled to and given every possible protection by the court from ill treatment. The permitting of a small riot over the person of Jesus, between the two court hearings, was totally illegal by Hebrew law.

(7) The Hebrew court trials of Christ never produced any acceptable testimony of witnesses against Jesus. And yet sentence of condemnation was pronounced. This was illegal. Let us consider this:

According to *Mark 14:55-64*, two separate charges were brought against Jesus in this court of law. The first was sedition, or a raising of discontent against the Jewish and Roman governments through inflammatory speeches and actions. But this charge had to be abandoned because the witnesses could not agree (*Mark 14:55-57,59*). Their testimony against Jesus was so mutually contradictory and false that even the wicked judges who had bribed them to give it had to reject what they said.

But according to Hebrew law the testimony of the witnesses must agree in all essential details or it must be rejected, and the defendant standing trial must be released at once. "If one witness contradicts another, the testimony is not accepted."--*Mishna, "Sanhedrin," C. V. 2*. Much of what the Jewish leaders seemed to be basing things on was hearsay evidence--but this too was forbidden under Jewish law. "Hearsay evidence was barred equally in civil as in criminal cases, no matter how strongly the witness might believe in what he heard and however worthy and numerous were his informants."--*Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, The Martyrdom of Jesus*.

And so the only hope of the enemies of Jesus was to bring about His condemnation through a change of charges from sedition against the government to blasphemy against God. But this switch over was to result in more illegalities.

(8) The accusation or charge or indictment against Christ was illegal on two counts--it was vague and indefinite. "The entire criminal procedure of the Mosaic code rests upon four rules: certainty in the indictment; publicity in the discussion; full freedom granted to the accused; and assurance against all dangers or errors of testimony."--*Joseph Salvador, Histoire des Institutions de Moise, p. 365*. This second charge was never clearly formulated in this court of law.

(9) An indictment against a person must deal with a definite crime, and the trial must be carried to completion on the basis of that charge. No prosecutor is ever permitted to change charges during the court proceedings because of a failure to prove the first charge on which the trial was based. When the false

witnesses failed to prove these charge of sedition, Jesus should have been set at liberty and the case dismissed. But this was not done. Instead, the presiding judge suddenly shifted to a new charge, that of blasphemy.

(10) As we have seen above, not one witness could be found against Jesus, --but in Hebrew law, not one but at least two witnesses must come forward and convincingly testify before sentence of condemnation could be pronounced (*Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15, Numbers 35:30*). And the testimony of these--at least two--witnesses must agree.

(11) The use of false witnesses was another serious infraction of Hebrew law. Such conduct not only disqualified the judge in the case from having further jurisdiction in that trial,--but on the basis of it he would also be relieved of his judgeship entirely. It also condemned the false witnesses involved to suffer the very penalty they sought to bring upon the accused. Those who testified against Jesus were themselves deserving of death.

Under Hebrew law false witnesses were very severely dealt with. Perjury placed a witness in a position fully as serious as that of the one he testified against. "Hebrew law provided that false witnesses should suffer the penalty provided for the commission of the crime which they sought by their testimony to fix upon the accused."--*Chandler, The Trial of Jesus, vol. 1, p. 140*. This rule is based on Deuteronomy 19:18-21.

(12) For some time before His trial, the Jewish authorities had Jesus constantly shadowed by hired informers, or spies. This also was unlawful (*Luke 20:20*). But in spite of this, when brought to witness against Him, their testimony was too contradictory to agree.

(13) Under Hebrew law, the judge was supposed to seek for evidence only in behalf of the accused. "The judges leaned always to the side of the defendant and gave him the advantage of every possible doubt."--*Chandler, The Trial of Jesus, vol. 1 pp. 153-154*. The Judge was not during the court trial to be searching for evidence that would convict the defendant. Benny declares that it was a maxim of the Jews that "the Sanhedrin was to save, not to destroy life." Other maxims recorded in the Mishna are: "Man's life belongs to God, and only according to the law of God may it be disposed of." "Whosoever preserves one worthy life is as meritorious as if he had preserved the world."

Hebrew law provided no lawyers either to defend or to prosecute. The judges were the defenders, and the witnesses the prosecutors. "The only prosecutors known to Talmudic criminal jurisprudence are the witnesses to the crime. Their duty is to bring the matter to the cognizance of the court, and to bear witness against the criminal. In capital cases, they are the legal executioners also. Of an official accuser or prosecutor there is nowhere any trace in the laws of the ancient Hebrews."--*S. Mendelsohn, The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews, p. 110*.

(14,15) To insure justice to the accused, under Hebrew law, the arguments must begin in his behalf. Nothing was permitted to be said against him till after at least one of the judges had spoken in his behalf. Neither of these two rules were followed in the case of Jesus, it would appear.

(16) The sentence against Jesus was unlawful because it was founded on His own confession (*Mark 14:61.64*). "Self accusation in cases of capital crime was worthless. For if not guilty he accuses himself of a falsehood; if guilty he is a wicked man, and no wicked man, according to Hebrew law, is permitted to testify, especially not in penal cases."--*Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, The Martyrdom of Jesus, p. 74*. Rabbi Wise is a learned Jewish rabbi of a century ago. The judges of Christ not only violated the law by acting as accusers, which only witnesses were to do, but in addition they illegally extracted a confession from Jesus and then used it as the basis for a death sentence.

"We hold it as fundamental, that no one shall prejudice himself. If a man accuses himself before a tribunal, we must not believe him, unless the fact is attested by two other witnesses . . . for our law does not condemn upon the simple confession of the accused [alone]"--*Hebrew law, quoted in M. Dupin, The Trial of Jesus Before Caiaphas and Pilate,*

"We have it as a fundamental principle of our jurisprudence that no one can bring an accusation against

himself. Should a man make confession of guilt before a legally constituted tribunal, such confession is not to be used against him unless properly attested by two other witnesses."--*Maimonides, "Sanhedrin," IV, 2.* Maimonides is an ancient Hebrew legal authority. "Not only is self-condemnation never extorted from the defendant by means of torture, but no attempt is ever made to lead him on to self-incrimination. Moreover, a voluntary confession on his part is not admitted in evidence, and therefore not competent to convict him, unless a legal number of witnesses [two or more] minutely corroborate his self-accusation." --S. Mendelsohn, *The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews*, p. 133.

(17) One of the strangest rules of law ever known was one in the Hebrew legal system: A person could not be convicted on a unanimous vote of the judges. "A simultaneous and unanimous verdict of guilt rendered on the day of the trial has the effect of an acquittal." --*Mendelsohn, The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews*, p. 141. "If none of the judges defend the culprit, i.e., all pronounce him guilty, having no defender in the court, the verdict of guilty was invalid and the sentence of death could not be executed."--*Rabbi Wise, The Martyrdom of Jesus*, p. 74. The reason for this rule is simple. It was the duty of the judges to defend the man, and at least one of them had to do it--or he had no one on his side to see that he received justice. Remember that under Hebrew law there were no defense lawyers. This was the work of the judges--and at least one of them had to do it.

"With the Anglo-Saxon jury a unanimous verdict is necessary to convict, but with the Hebrew Sanhedrin unanimity was fatal [to the case against the accused], and resulted in an acquittal - - Now if the verdict was unanimous in favor of condemnation it was evident that the prisoner had had no friend or defender in court [for by Jewish law, he had only the judges as his defendants] ."--*Chandler, The Trial of Christ*, vol. 1, pp. 280-281.

Scripture is clear--a unanimous verdict based solely on the testimony of Jesus was handed down by the Sanhedrin judges. "They answered and said. He is guilty of death." *Matthew 26:66*. "They all condemned Him to be guilty of death." *Mark 14:64*. This unanimous sentence was predicted over 600 years earlier (*Isaiah 59:16, 63:3,5*).

*It is significant that throughout the trial, Jesus was silent when falsely accused and one might normally speak. --And then He spoke at a time when silence would have been His best defense.* "The condemnation had already been decided upon before the trial - - Jesus knew it, and disdained to reply to what was advanced in the first place because it was false; [but] what was advanced in the second place He of His own accord and freely admitted, because in its material basis it was true. When a false and unjust charge was brought against Him, He held His peace, and He answered when no proof not even a false one, constrained Him to speak."--*Giovanni Rosadi, The Trial of Jesus*, p. 180.

*Jesus was asked a direct question as to whether He was the Messiah. It would have been to His personal advantage to remain silent, and He would have been within His rights to do so, and we well know He could not have been compelled to speak if He did not want to. But silence at this time would have been a virtual denial of His identity and mission. In every case, Jesus was always true to the right.*

(18) The trial was concluded by a judge that had been disqualified to conduct it. This too was illegal. Under the Mosaic code, if a high priest intentionally tore his clothing, he was automatically disqualified as high priest and was to receive the death sentence (*Leviticus 10:6, 21:10*). Caiaphas did this during the trial of Jesus. The official garments of the high priest were symbolic of the Messiah. Also such an act would reveal a rage that was beneath the dignity of the high priest. "An ordinary Israelite could, as an emblem of bereavement, tear his garments, but to the high priest it was forbidden, because his vestments, being made after the express orders of God, were figurative of his office."--*M.M. Lemann, Jesus Before the Sanhedrin*, p. 140.

(19) By Hebrew law the balloting carried on here was illegal. In a criminal case the judges must vote one at a time, beginning with the youngest. Each in his turn had to arise and cast his vote and then state his reason for his decision. Both the vote and the reasons for it must be written down by the scribes before the next man stood up to give his sentence in the matter. Instead of this, Jesus was condemned by an acclamation--a single chorus of approval (*Matthew 26:66, Mark 14:64*).

"In ordinary cases the judges voted according to seniority, the oldest commencing; in a capital trial, the reverse order was followed [the youngest voted individually before the older ones]."--*Phillip Berger Benny, The Criminal Code of the Jews, pp. 73-74.*

"Let the judges each in his turn absolve or condemn."--*Mishna, "Sanhedrin," XV.* The decisions of each judge could not be recorded if this practice were not followed. "The members of the Sanhedrin were seated in the form of a semicircle at the extremity of which a secretary was placed, whose business it was to record the votes. One of these secretaries recorded the votes in favor of the accused, the other those against him."--*Mishan "Sanhedrin," IV, 3.*

(20) The verdict against Jesus was also illegal because it was not given in the place required by Hebrew law. It was believed that Deuteronomy 17:8-9 meant that the death sentence could only be pronounced in one certain place. For this, they chose a room in the Temple that was called "The Hall of Gazith," or "the hall of hewn stone." Mendelsohn tells us that outside of this judgment hall no capital trial could be conducted, and no capital sentence pronounced. Here is what the law says: "A sentence of death can be pronounced only so long as the Sanhedrin holds its sessions in the appointed place." --*Maimonides, "Sanhedrin," XIV.* A sentence in the Talmud declares: "After leaving the hall Gazith no sentence of death can be passed upon anyone soever."--*Talmud, Bab., Abodah Zarah, or of Idolatry, chap. 1, fol. 8.*

It is evident from the record that Jesus was tried and condemned in the palace of Caiaphas on Mount Zion, and not in the hall of hewn stone. Edersheim, the Christian Jew, comments on this: "There is truly not a tittle of evidence for the assumption of commentators, that Christ was led from the palace of Caiaphas into the council chamber. The whole proceedings took place in the former, and from it Christ was brought to Pilate."--*Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, vol. 2, p. 556.*

(21) The trial of Christ was illegal because it was based on bribery. The judges of Jesus had bribed Judas to deliver Him into their hands for a specified sum of money (Luke 22:3-6). Geikie says that the "thirty pieces of silver" was the price of a slave. Dwight L. Moody once said, "God sent His only-begotten Son to ransom man; and man offered thirty pieces of silver for Him."

The Mosaic code was very severe on those who wrested judgment through bribery (*Exodus 23:1-8*). Under Hebrew law, this included judges who gave bribes as well as received them. In all nations and in all ages, the giving or receiving of bribes by judges disqualifies them from office, and nullifies their verdict. In this case, the evidence of bribery was publicly given by Judas, in the midst of the judgment hall and in the sight of all the spectators, when he returned the bribe money and confessed his part in the matter (*Matthew 27:1-6*). According to Acts 1:19, this was done so publicly that "it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem."

(22) The condemnation of Jesus by the Sanhedrin was illegal because the judges were disqualified to pass sentence upon Him because of their hatred of Him. Benny, the noted Jewish legal expert, states the law of the Hebrews--and of all nations--when he says: "Nor under any circumstances, was a man known to be at enmity with the accused person permitted to occupy a position among his judges."--*Phillip Berger Benny, The Criminal Code of the Jews, p. 37.* "Nor must there be on the judicial bench either a relation or a particular friend, or an enemy of either the accused or of the accuser."--*Mendelsohn, The Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews, p. 108.* If a defendant has the slightest reason to suspect the enmity of a judge, he can demand that his case be brought before another judge.

And what is the record: Within the six months previous to the trial, there had been at least three meetings of the Sanhedrin, the highest council and court in the land,--specifically for the purpose of planning the death of Christ. The first of these three sessions is given us in John 7:37-53. The second occurred a few weeks before the trial, and is recorded in John 11:41-53. The third council meeting to plan His death took place just before Passover (*Luke 22:1-3*). And of course, their judicial enmity against Christ is also shown not only by the bribing of Judas, but also by the hiring of false witnesses. Jesus had been condemned, and even sentenced to die, before the trial ever began.

(23) The judges of Christ were also disqualified to listen to the case or to pass verdict on it because most of them had been dishonestly elected to office. Under Hebrew law, the members of the Sanhedrin must be chosen only because of high nobility of character. "The robe of the unfairly elected judge is to be respected

not more than the blanket of the ass."--*Mendelsohn, Hebrew Maxims and Rules, p. 182.*

(24) In addition, they were to receive no salary or reward for their membership in the Sanhedrin. It is a well-known fact that many of the judges of Jesus were not only degenerate and corrupt in character, but that they had purchased their seats in the council, and were making merchandise of their offices. In fact, several of them had grown rich by this means. This was especially true of the family of Annas, the high-priest. The amount of information available to support these last two illegalities would fill most of this sheet of paper.

**"Throughout the whole course of that trial [of Jesus before the Sanhedrin] the rules of the Jewish law of procedure were grossly violated, and the accused was deprived of rights, belonging even to the meanest (lowliest) citizen. He was arrested in the night, bound as a malefactor, beaten before His arraignment, and struck in open court during the trial; He was tried on a feast day, and before sunrise; He was compelled to criminate Himself, and this, under an oath of solemn judicial adjuration; and He was sentenced on the same day of the conviction. In all these particulars the law was wholly disregarded. "--Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice, p. 566.* Simon Greenleaf was professor of law at Harvard University at the beginning of the twentieth century and was considered to be one of the outstanding legal minds of his day.**

**"Grasping priests denounced Him, false witnesses accused Him, judges of bad faith condemned Him; a friend betrayed Him, no one defended Him; He was dragged with every kind of contumely and violence to the malefactor's cross, where He spoke the last words of truth and brotherhood among men. It was one of the greatest and most memorable acts of injustice. "--Giovanni Rosadi, *The Trial of Christ, p. 1.***