

The Trial of Jesus (Matthew 26:57 – 68)

There were basically two separate trials of Jesus Christ – the Jewish trial and the Roman trial. After Judas had betrayed Jesus Christ, he was arrested and taken to Caiaphas, the high priest where the members of Sanhedrin – the highest Jewish council gathered. There, Jesus was tried and found guilty of blasphemy for claiming to be the son of God. The punishment for this offence by the Jewish is the death penalty, but being a colony with the Roman Empire, they did not have the power to pass the death sentence. For this reason, they had to take Jesus to the Roman representative, Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem where he was tried the second time and found guilty, although he was innocent. This was to fulfill the scripture, for it has been destined that he would die for the forgiveness of the sins committed by man.

Christ Before The High Priest

Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane where he told his disciples to wait for him while he went up to pray. He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. He began to be sorrowful and troubled. He told them that his soul was sorrowful even to death and that they should remain and watch with him. Going a little further, Jesus prayed, "My father if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will but as thou will". He came back to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he asked Peter: "So could you not watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:40 – 41) For the second time he prayed, repeating the same words. Again he came back and discovered that the disciples eyes were heavy with sleep. He left them and went away to pray again with the same words for the third time. After this, he came back to the disciples and said to them: "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold the hour is at hand and the son of man is betrayed into the hands of the sinners. Rise; let us be going; see my betrayer is at hand." (Matthew 26:44 – 46) While he was still speaking, Judas, one of his disciples came with a great crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priest and the elders of the people. The betrayer (Judas) had given them a sign saying, "The one I shall kiss is the man; seize him." Judas came up to Jesus and said, "Hail master". Immediately, they came up, laid hand on him and seized him. One of the disciples of Jesus stretched out his hands, drew his sword and cut off the ear of the slave of the priest. Jesus was against this and he said: "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my father; and he will once send more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled that it must be so?. And turning to the crowd Jesus said: "Have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching and you did not seize me. But all this has taken place that the scripture of the prophets might be fulfilled." It was at this juncture that the disciples fled. Those who seized him led him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. Peter followed him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest. He went inside and sat with the guards to see the end. The chief priest and the whole council (the Sanhedrin) sought false testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death, but they found none. At last, two people came forward and

said, "This fellow said I am able to destroy the temple of God and build it in three days." The high priest stood up and asked Jesus to give an answer to the testimony against, but Jesus kept quiet. The chief priest persuaded him to make a reply, but Jesus answered him: "You have said so but I tell you here after you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Matthew 26:64) The high priest tore his robes and said: "He has uttered blasphemy; why shall we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgement?" The people answered, "He deserves death." They spat on his face and struck him; some slapped him saying, "Prophecy to us you Christ! Who is it that struck you?" Peter was sitting outside the courtyard and a maid came and asked him, "were you not with Jesus the Galilean." He denied this before them saying, "I do not know what you mean". When he came out to porch, another maid saw him and said to the bystander, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." Peter denied this again, this time with an oath. After a little while, the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "certainly you are also one of them for your accent betrays you." Peter began to invoke a curse on himself and swear, "I do not know the man". Immediately the cock crowed and Peter remembered that Jesus had said that before the cock crowed he, Peter, would deny him three times. He went out and wept bitterly.

Christ Before Pilate And The Roman Authorities (Matthew 27:11 – 31)

After the trial by the Sanhedrin, Jesus was bound and arranged before Pilate. Pilate asked Jesus whether he was the king of the Jews according to the allegation brought against him by the chief priest, scribes and the Pharisees. Jesus replied that Pilate had said so. Pilate asked Jesus to defend himself. In view of numerous allegations levelled against him, but Jesus made no reply and this made Pilate wonder greatly. At the feast of the Passover celebrations, it was custom of the governor to release a prisoner whom the people wanted. The notorious criminal called Barabbas. When the people gathered; Pilate asked them to take the decision on the person they wanted him to release to them – Barabbas or Jesus who is also called Christ. Pilate knew it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Moreover, his wife had sent a message to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man for I have suffered much over him today in a dream." The governor repeated his question. The chief priests and the elders persuaded the people to opt for Barabbas and they did instead of Jesus. Pilate asked them what they wanted to do with Jesus and they shouted, "Let him be crucified". Pilate asked them if Jesus committed any offence, but they shouted all the more that he should be crucified. He took water and washed his hand publicly and said, "I am innocent in this man's blood; see it to yourselves". All the people answered, "His blood should be on us and our children". Then he released them Barabbas and they scourged Jesus. The soldiers of the governors took Jesus into the auditorium and they gathered the whole battalion before him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe upon him and planted a crown of thorns upon his head. They also put reed in his right hand and kneeling before him, they mocked him saying, "Hail the king of the Jews." They spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. After they had finished mocking him, they stripped him off the robe and put his clothes on him and led him away to be crucified.

Ways In Which People Are Denied Justice In The Society

It can be seen from the trial of Jesus, he was denied justice due to envy by the council of Sanhedrin made of the scribes, the chief priest and the elders. In the same way, people are denied justice today through the following: i. Hiring of false witness ii. Adjournment: delay of trial and judgement iii. Bribery: some judges demand and take bribes iv. Falsification of evidence v. Failure to deliver judgement as at when due vi. Rigging of elections vii. Nepotism and tribalism

Christ Before Herod (Luke 23:6 – 12)

The trial of Jesus before Herod was only recorded in the gospel according to Luke. When Pilate learnt that Jesus was a Galilean which was within Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod who was himself in Jerusalem. When Herod saw Jesus, he was glad, for he longed desired to see him. He heard about Jesus and he was anxious to see some signs performed by him. Herod questioned Jesus at length but Jesus did not reply him, not minding that the chief priest and the Pharisees were accusing vehemently. However, Herod and his soldiers treated Christ with contempt and mockery. They dressed him in gorgeous apparels and sent him back to Pilate. The trial of Christ gave Herod and Pilate an opportunity to reconcile for they were enemies before that period.

Significance of the Trial of Christ

i. Despite the series of false allegations levelled against Jesus and the fact that he was not found guilty, he was crucified because it was the will of God that it should be so. ii. The messiahship of Jesus Christ could only be accomplished through his death and by this the scripture was fulfilled. iii. Jesus went through embarrassment and torture for the salvation of our souls. He endured all, despite the fact that he didn't live a sinful life. This is, therefore, a lesson to the Christians that the road to salvation is not easy but the glory comes at the end. iv. Although, it had been destined that Jesus would die, because Judas was living in sin, he was used to accomplish the obnoxious task. Christians should, therefore be steadfast. v. The priest and Pharisees releasing Barabbas, the notorious robber to killing Jesus, based on envy and hatred. This can be noticed in the present age where authorities punish innocent people and pardon criminals.

THE CRUCIFIXION, DEATH AND BURIAL OF JESUS CHRIST

The Crucifixion of Jesus (Matthew 27:32 – 56)

After Jesus had been condemned to death, he was led away by soldiers to the place of crucifixion. Due to physical exhaustion, Jesus was unable to carry his cross. A man of Current, Simon whom they met on the way was appealed to carry the cross for Jesus to the place of his crucifixion called Golgotha which means the place of skull. There they offered him wine filled with gall which he tasted but refused to drink. At that place they crucified him along with two robbers, one on his right and the other on the left. They shared his garment among themselves by drawing lots. Over his head, they put a charge against him: "This is Jesus the king of the Jews." Nailed on the cross the passerby, the Pharisees, the scribes and the chief priests mocked him, each according to his own perspective. And about the sixth hour, there was darkness over the land until the ninth hour. About the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli lama sachtani" which

means "My God My God why has thou forsaken me". Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. The curtains of the temple was torn into two from top to bottom; the earth shook and rocks were split; the tombs were opened and the body of the saints who have fallen asleep raised. When those who were keeping watch over Jesus saw what happened were filled with awe and said, "truly this was the son of God". Then so many women who were looking at the whole thing from afar were those who had followed Jesus from Galilee ministering to him, including Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James and John and Mother of the sons of Zebedee.

The Burial of Jesus (Matthew 27:57 – 61)

In the evening of the day of crucifixion, a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea who was also a disciple of Jesus went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate ordered it to be given to him. Joseph took the body wrapped it in clean linen and laid it in his own new tomb. He rolled over the stone at the entrance of the tomb and departed. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the sepulcher.

Significance Of Joseph's Action In The Burial Of Jesus

i. He was a true friend (a friend in need) ii. He made up for the friendship denied Jesus by his enemies. iii. It would be sad to allow Jesus to be left hanging on the cross on the Sabbath day as if he were a common criminal. iv. It would be worse still if it was left till the Passover night which the paschal lamb was being slain. v. He could not allow Jesus' body to be buried in a common burial ground meant for criminals. vi. As a mark of his faith in Jesus, he had to honour him by burying him in a new grave.

The Words Of Jesus Christ On The Cross (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34, Luke 23:34,43,46)

Jesus made seven statements on the cross, only four are found in the synoptic gospel while the other three are in the gospel of John. For the purpose of this study, we will lay emphasis only on the four that are in the syllabus. i. "Eli, Eli Lama Sabacthani" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) This expression means "My God My God why has thou forsaken me? This statement of Jesus is the opening verse of Psalm 22. It may be that Jesus was receiving this psalm. The Psalm describes the agony and the desperation of a righteous man. It starts with despair but ends with the note of confidence and trust in God. ii. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34) By this statement, Jesus was praying for forgiveness for his enemies – those that betrayed him and those that mocked him and crucified him on the cross. Thus, by this, Jesus demonstrated the example of what he taught in "Our Lord's prayer". iii. "Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43) By this statement, Jesus offered salvation to the repentant robber. This further shows Jesus determination to offer salvation to repentant sinners even on the cross. iv. "Father, into the hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46) Jesus made this statement when he was about to yield up his spirit committed his spirit into the hands of the father who sent him. The returned to him during the time of resurrection.

Significance of Christ's Death and the Lessons to Learn

Jesus died on the cross to save us . The blood he shed on the cross for the atonement of our sins. He died that we might live; he was mocked that we might be glorified. All that Christ went through on the cross of Calvary was for the benefit of mankind whom he came to save which the summary of the message was given by prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 53:5) "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, upon him was the chastisement that made us whole and with his stripes we are healed".

The messiahship of Jesus Christ was accomplished on the cross of Calvary It is important to note that after the death of Jesus, he was glorified by his father, but during his earthly ministry, he was not glorified. This is expressed in Phillipians 2:8 – 11: "And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross. Therefore, God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus Christ every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and the glory of God the Father". The important point to note in this case is that salvation of Christians is based on strong belief in the sacrifice Jesus made for them. They should try as much as possible to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. It is only in this regard that his salvation is assured.

Jesus Christ is presented as being submissive. He allowed the persecutors to have their way so that the scripture would be fulfilled.