

15 Jesus Christ the Saviour - The trial

Jewish Laws

Mishna, collection of interpretations of the legal portions of the Torah [that's the first five books of the Bible] and a codification of traditional Jewish practice. The Mishna and the Gemara, a commentary on the Mishna, constitute the Talmud. Next to the Scriptures, the Mishna is the basic textbook of Jewish life and thought, covering, e.g., agriculture, Sabbath and festivals, marriage and divorce, and civil and criminal matters. The final compilation of the Mishna was made under the direction of Judah ha-Nasi from the work of the Tannaim, a group of sages of the 1st and 2d cent. A.D., including Akiba ben Joseph. The Mishna has been widely translated and has had a considerable influence beyond the confines of Judaism.



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The Lord Jesus faced several trials:

1. Before Annas (John 18:12-23)
2. Before Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57-68, Mark 14:53-71, Luke 22:54-65, John 18:24-27) in the High Priest's house.
3. Meeting of the Sanhedrin (Matthew 27:1, Mark 15:1, Luke 22:66-71) - though Jesus may not have been present.
4. Before Pilate (Matthew 27:11-14, Mark 15:2-5, Luke 23:1-4, John 18:28-32)
5. Before Herod (Luke 23:6-11)
6. Pilate again (Matthew 27:15-26, Mark 15:6-15, Luke 23:13-25, John 18:33-19:16)

The Jewish Trials



Read the verses that describe Jesus' trials before the Jews and see whether or not it was legal. Here are some points of Jewish law.

	Was this observed?
Before anyone could be arrested someone had to present a formal charge.	
Jewish trials had to be carried out during daytime.	
The Jewish court (the Sanhedrin) by law was not allowed to originate charges - they had to be made by witnesses.	
Unless two witnesses were found whose evidence agreed, the trial could not proceed.	
Jewish law did not permit the trial of a capital offence to begin on a Friday or the day before an annual Sabbath.	
The defendant could only be condemned in relation to the crime of which the witnesses had accused him.	

	Was this observed?
According to Jewish law, a person could not be condemned on his own testimony.	
The law in the Mishna says: "The judges shall weigh the matter in the sincerity of their conscience" ("Sanhedrin" IV, 5).	
Under Jewish law, a death sentence could be pronounced only in the court's appointed place.	
If Jesus had been found guilty in a Jewish court, when he was taken to Pilate he should have been charged with the same offence.	
Jewish law says: "If a sentence of death is to be pronounced, it [a criminal case] cannot be concluded before the following day" (Mishna, "Sanhedrin" IV, 1). This was to allow sufficient opportunity for any witnesses in support of the accused to present themselves.	

The Roman Trial

Read the accounts of Jesus' trials before Pilate and Herod (okay, Herod was a Syrian not a Roman)

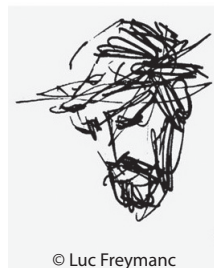
What accusations did the Jews make to Pilate so that he would pronounce the death penalty?

What was Pilate's verdict?

Pilate had a history of blunders in his governorship which the Jews were well aware of. He could not afford to be in trouble with Rome.

What did the Jews say which made Pilate give them what they wanted?

All in all, what do you think. Was justice done?



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What would you have done if you had been there?