

Trial Begins (Luke 22:38-71)



A. Jesus in Gethsemane (22:39-45)

After sending away Judas 'to do what he must do quickly' (Jn 13:27), Jesus went to the garden of Gethsemane on Mt Olives (v39). It was His customary place of prayer. Jesus loved to pray in this garden. He now had one hour or two left till his arrest. Judas knew this place well and he'd already contacted the temple police (Jn 18:2). Jesus' last words to disciples as He entered His spiritual battle were, '*Pray that you may not enter into temptation*' (22:40, 46). He wanted this line of defence to secure His time with the Father (Matt 26:36-37).

1. **Jesus' Greatest Battle**

(a) The Humanity of Jesus: The disciples – Peter, James and John - saw something *disturbing*. Jesus is in 'visible distress.' They had never seen Him like this before. He 'knelt' in 'agony and prayed' or was '*sorrowful and deeply distressed*' (Matt 26:37). Jesus said, '*My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.*' (Matt 26:38). Was Jesus not the bravest man? But Jesus' soul was recoiling from the horror of the cross: '*Dad, can I not go through with it?*'

(b) What was in the Cup? It was God's wrath against all unrighteousness (Ps 11:6; Is 51:17; Ezek 23:33). We cannot imagine what it was like for Jesus. He was the Son of God in eternal communion with the Father. To be abandoned by His Father was infinitely worse than death itself. A few hours later Jesus would cry out on the cross, '*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*' (Matt 27:46). That was when Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath to the last drop and 'He who knew no sin became sin for us.' (2 Cor 5:21) This was the battle Jesus fought in Gethsemane till He submitted to the Father, '*Father, if it is Your will take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done.*' (22:42)

(c) First Shedding of the Blood: Jesus' distress was such that the veins in His forehead burst from the extreme pressure and the drops of blood flowed mingled with perspiration fell from His face to the ground (22:44).

2. **Disciple's Response:** What were the disciples doing in the hour of Jesus' need? They were '*sleeping from sorrow*' (22:45), '*worn out by grief*' (NEB). This is a common human response, a way of escaping stress. An angel appeared and strengthened Jesus (22:43). Angels were always with Jesus. The only time they were missing was when Jesus was on the cross. Now for the last time Jesus asks the disciples to pray for their own sake, '*lest you enter into temptation*' (22:46). When the temple police came to arrest Jesus, the disciples had no spiritual defence. *This is a lesson for all of us!*

B. Jesus' Arrest (22:47-62)

1. **Judas' Betrayal (22:47-53)** - It was the Jewish soldiers, i.e. the temple police, who arrested Jesus. According to John's gospel, around 600 military men were sent to arrest Jesus with swords, clubs, lanterns and torches (Jn 18:3).

(a) Jesus' Three Rebukes: (i) Jesus rebuked Judas for betraying Him with a kiss – the sign of loyalty and affection (c.f. 1 Thess 5:26). Jesus said of Judas, '*It would have been better if this man were not born.*' (Matt 26:24) Judas took his own life a few hours later. (ii) Jesus rebuked Peter for cutting off a man's ear (22:50). '*All who take the sword will perish by the sword.*' (Matt 26:52) Jesus was ready to drink the cup, '*Permit even this.*' (22:51, c.f. Jn 18:10) (iii) Jesus rebuked the soldiers for cowardice coming at night to arrest Him (22:52) as if He would fight and run to hide!

(b) The prayerless disciples' response: All ran for their life. Dear old Peter charged with his sword but missed his target and managed to slice off Malchus' right ear. This was the best the carnal prayerless nature can produce. Peter with all his zeal couldn't see the will of God. Jesus healed Malchus' ear. It was His last miracle on earth. Jesus submitted the Father's will. It was the hour for the power of darkness.

2. **Peter's Denial of Jesus (22:54-62)**

(a) The temple police took Jesus to the former high priest's house. Anna (5-15AD) the 'Godfather' ruled behind Caiaphas, his son-in-law and the current puppet high priest. Peter followed Jesus from a distance to

the courtyard and sat by the charcoal fire. A servant girl looked intently at Peter and said, 'This man was also *with Him*.' (22:56) Peter couldn't stand up to the young girl and denied knowing the Lord. Little later another person said to Peter, 'You also are of them.' (22:58). Once he denied the Lord openly, he had no choice but to keep going. An hour later someone *confidently affirmed*, 'Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.' (22:59) This was the relative of Malchus whose ear Peter had lopped off! (Jn 18:26) This time Peter vehemently denied the Lord with 'cursing and swearing.' (Mk 14:71; Matt 26:74) '*Man, I do not know what you are saying!*' (22:60) Just then, at 3am the rooster crowed. And Peter suddenly remembered the Lord's words. But that wasn't the worst thing.

(b) At that very moment Jesus lifted his bruised face and looked at Peter across the courtyard, and their eyes met. Jesus was bound, abused, beaten, and bloodied by the temple police. That moment must have felt like an eternity to Peter and his pain inexpressible. *What was the look in Jesus' eyes?* Was it: (i) '*I told you, Peter, that you will deny me three times before the rooster crows.*' (22:34) (ii) '*Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.*' (22:31) (iii) '*But remember Peter, I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail.*' (22:32)

(c) Peter left the courtyard and wept bitterly outside (22:62). He meant it when he said, 'I am ready to die for you, Lord.' He did love the Lord, but he just couldn't go all the way with Him. Jesus knew Peter wasn't the brave hero. Now Peter knew it too. By 3am whatever strength Peter had, drained out. But this is not the end of Peter's story. He would see the Lord again on the shores of Galilee across the charcoal fire. The Lord would cook breakfast for His disciples and reinstate Peter, and tell him, 'Peter, one day you will die for Me.' And he dies decades later, crucified upside down because he felt he was not worthy to die the same way as Jesus did. What was the difference between Peter and Judas? Peter, even with the foot-in-mouth disease, truly loved the Lord and had a true relationship with Him. That's the only thing that matters for each of us in the end.

C. Jesus on Trial in the Jewish Court (22:63-71)

1. The temple soldiers took Jesus from Anna's house to Caiaphas's house (c.f. Jn 18:24). Jesus was put under guard until the proper hearing in the Jewish court of the Sanhedrin. One of the perks of being a soldier in those days was, they could do anything to their captives. So, they mocked and tortured Jesus (22:33-34).

(a) The soldiers blindfolded Him, beat Him with fists and palms of their hands, and spat on Him and mocked, 'Prophesy who struck You.' (Matt 26:27) They beat Jesus' face with rods. '*I will strike the Judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek.*' (Micah 5:1) This is the second time Jesus shed blood.

(b) This was a terrible travesty of justice for someone who wasn't even yet convicted. The law of Moses did not allow Passover lambs to be tortured before the sacrifice. It was to be a quick and clean death for them. But Jesus was tortured to the point He lost the appearance of a man (Is 52:14).

2. Now as soon as the daybreak came, the elders, the priests and the scribes began the hearing. They planned to charge Jesus with blasphemy, which is punishable by death in the law of Moses. This was the greatest miscarriage of justice.

(a) It was illegal to hold a trial at night, but they were in hurry. So, they started the trial on the night of Jesus' arrest and prearranged the Sanhedrin hearing at the daybreak to 'legitimise' the verdict they had reached during the night.

(b) They were trying to incriminate Jesus out of His mouth. They were required to produce two or three reliable witnesses under the law of Moses.

(c) Even after following proper trial procedures, the guilty verdict could not be handed down until the day after the trial (Sanhedrin 4:1).

3. Now Jesus was in the Sanhedrin. In their interrogation, they bring up the three titles of Jesus below.

(a) '*If you are Christ (Messiah), tell us.*' (22:67)

(b) *'If I tell you, you will by no means believe. And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go. (c.f. 20:41ff - remember Jesus questioned the Sadducees regarding the divinity of the Messiah?) Hereafter, the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.'* (22:67-69) This refers to the prophecy of Daniel, *'And behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him...'* (Dan 7:13)

(c) They all understood what Jesus meant. So, they directly asked Jesus, *'Are you then the Son of God?' (22:70)* Claiming Messiahship is not blasphemy, but claiming divinity is. Jesus said, *'You say rightly that I AM.'* 'I AM', 'ego eimi' in Greek is 'YHWH' in Hebrew. 'I AM WHO I AM.' (Ex 3:14) Jesus said many times, 'I AM the bread of life; I AM the light of the world; I AM the truth, etc.'

They jumped! *'We have nailed this man. What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.'* (22:71) Again, this was an illegal move to lead the defendant to condemn himself. They needed two or three witnesses, but their testimonies did not line up. *So, Jesus was condemned to death not for what He did, but for what He said about Himself on the charge of blasphemy.*

4. Now there was another problem. Blasphemy is not punishable by death under the Roman law, and the Jewish courts did not have the authority to hand down capital punishment. They could only execute someone by reporting him to the Roman authority with a crime worthy of capital punishment under the Roman law. So, they changed Jesus' 'crime' from 'blasphemy' to 'treason' on the way to the Roman court. They claimed Jesus forbade the people to pay tax to Caesar, which was a lie.

All these steps in the blatant miscarriage of justice were building up to the crucifixion of Jesus. It was God's will for Jesus to be executed on the cross in our place and pay for our sin, fully and completely.

One day Judas, the high priests, and all of us will stand before Jesus in His court. Are you ready?

D. Reflection

1. What do we learn about the importance of prayer from the garden of Gethsemane? Consider Jesus' example and the disciples' failure to pray, and the outcome.
2. Consider Peter, Judas and Annas – the good, the bad and the ugly. Some pay for their sins in this life while others seem to get away. Then some look like total failures but they come back strongly. What would you say is the crucial difference between Peter and the others?
3. Jesus' trial was the greatest miscarriage of justice in any day. In what ways was this trial a farce? Do you believe that although terribly unjust, yet this was God's will for Jesus?
4. Peter testified of Jesus that 'when they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.' (1 Pet 2:23) How do we respond when we suffer injustice?