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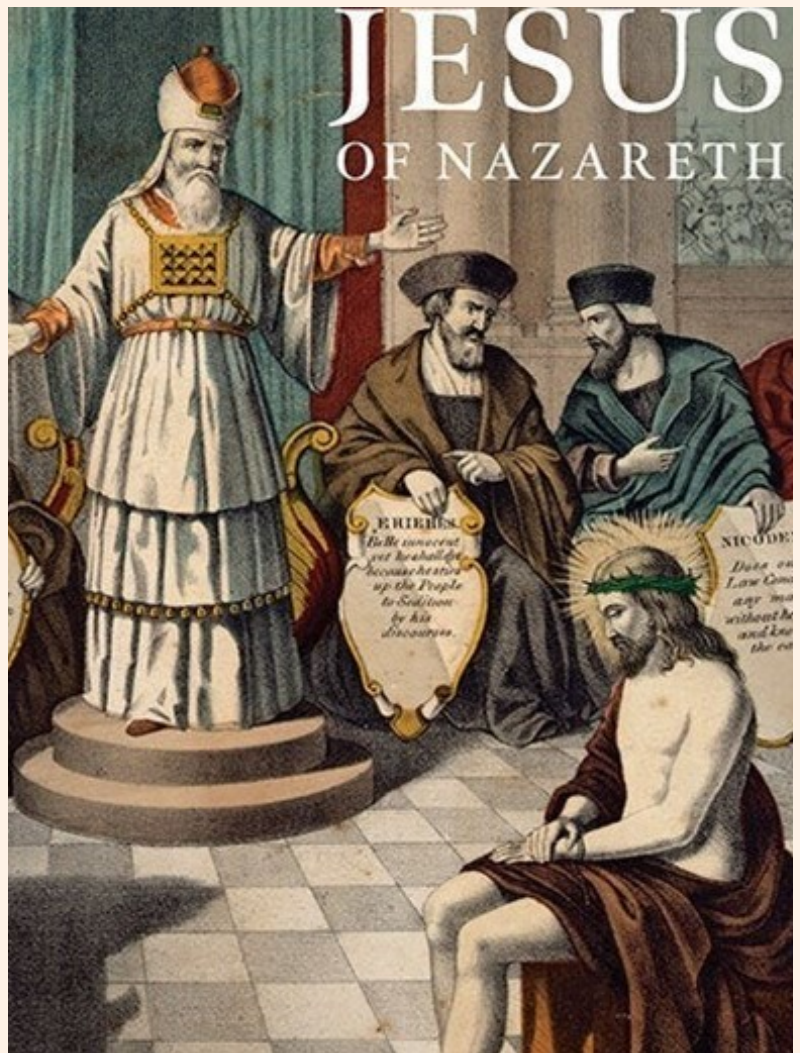
The Trial That Changed History

“When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, ‘I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it.’ And all the people answered and said, ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’ Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.” Matthew 27:24-26

The Innocent King Condemned

History records many trials—some fair, many unjust. Courts are designed to uphold truth, defend the innocent, and punish wrongdoing. Yet, across generations, there have been moments when justice failed, when truth was silenced, and when power outweighed righteousness. One well-known example is the trial of Socrates, who was sentenced to death for teaching truth and challenging accepted beliefs. However, even that miscarriage of justice pales in comparison to one trial that stands above all others—the trial of Jesus Christ.

This was no ordinary trial. It was the moment when the Judge of all the earth stood before human judges, when the Creator stood before His own creation, and when the only sinless man who ever lived was condemned by sinners. What appeared to be the greatest injustice in history became, in reality, the greatest act of redemption.



1. The Religious Trial — Truth Rejected

The first phase of Jesus’ trial took place before the Jewish religious leaders. According to the Gospel accounts (Matthew 26–27), this trial was deeply flawed from the beginning. The leaders were not seeking truth—they were seeking a verdict. Their decision had already been made: Jesus must die.

Jewish law required that trials be conducted fairly. They were to take place during daylight, witnesses were

required to agree, and the accused was to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. Yet in Jesus' case, every one of these principles was violated. False witnesses were brought forward, but even their testimonies did not align. The system that was meant to uphold justice instead became a tool to destroy it.

Why did this happen? The answer lies in human nature.

Why did this happen? The answer lies in human nature. Jesus' teachings challenged the authority and traditions of the religious leaders. Instead of examining His claims honestly, they chose to protect their power. Truth stood before them, yet they rejected it.

This moment fulfilled ancient prophecy. Psalm 27:12 speaks of false witnesses rising up, and Isaiah 53:7 describes the Messiah as one who would be oppressed yet remain silent. Remarkably, Jesus did not defend Himself aggressively. Like a lamb led to the slaughter, He chose silence.

This silence was not weakness—it was purpose. Jesus understood that this trial was part of a divine plan. What seemed like injustice on earth was unfolding according to God's plan.

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2. The Political Trial — Justice Compromised

After the religious trial, Jesus was taken to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Here, the trial shifted from religious accusation to political evaluation. Pilate, unlike the Jewish leaders, found no fault in Jesus.

In fact, Pilate declared Jesus innocent multiple times. He examined Him, questioned Him, and even sent Him to Herod. Yet the conclusion remained the same: there was no crime deserving

punishment. Despite this, the outcome of the trial would not be determined by truth—but by pressure.

The crowd, stirred by religious leaders, demanded crucifixion. Their voices grew louder and more aggressive. They even threatened Pilate politically, saying that releasing Jesus would make him disloyal to Caesar. In that moment, Pilate faced a choice between justice and self-preservation.

He chose his position over truth.

Fear overcame courage. The proverb, "The fear of man brings a snare," became reality in Pilate's life. Though he recognized innocence, he lacked the strength to act on it. He symbolically washed his hands, attempting to distance himself from responsibility, but history remembers that he approved the execution.

Without courage, truth can still be compromised.

This part of the trial reveals a powerful truth: knowing what is right is not enough. Without courage, truth can still be compromised.

A historical example illustrates this well. Jan Hus, a reformer, was given the opportunity to save his life by denying the truth he preached. Unlike Pilate, he refused to compromise. He chose truth over safety and was burned at the stake. His life stands in contrast to Pilate's failure.

3. The Crowd's Choice — Barabbas or Jesus

In a final attempt to release Jesus, Pilate offered the crowd a choice. It was customary during the Passover festival to release one prisoner. Pilate presented two options: Jesus, the innocent teacher, or Barabbas, a known criminal guilty of rebellion and murder.

The choice seemed obvious.

Yet the crowd chose Barabbas.

This moment reveals the depth of human broken-

ness. When faced with truth and righteousness, people chose rebellion. They rejected the one who came to save them and demanded the release of one who represented sin.

This was not merely a historical decision—it was symbolic of humanity’s condition. We often choose what is harmful over what is right, what is easy over what is true.

The apostle Peter later confronted the people with this reality in Acts 3:14, saying that they rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer instead.

But within this tragic choice lies the heart of the Gospel.

Barabbas walked free, though he was guilty. Jesus was condemned, though He was innocent. This is substitution. This is grace.

Barabbas represents humanity—all of us who are guilty. Jesus represents the Savior who takes our place. The innocent dies so that the guilty can go free.

4. The Mockery of the King — Humiliation Before Glory

After the verdict, Jesus endured brutal mockery at the hands of Roman soldiers. They crowned Him with thorns, placed a purple robe on His shoulders, and mocked Him as “King of the Jews.” They struck Him and ridiculed Him.

What they intended as mockery revealed a deeper truth.

It would be established through suffering, humility, and sacrifice.

Jesus is indeed King.

But His kingdom would not be established through force or political power. It would be established through suffering, humility, and sacrifice.

Philippians 2:8–9 tells us that Jesus humbled Himself to the point of death—even death on a cross—

and therefore God exalted Him. His humiliation became the pathway to His glory.

Hebrews 12:2 further explains that Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before Him. He saw beyond the suffering. He saw redemption, restoration, and the salvation of humanity.

An illustration helps us understand this: a diamond becomes brilliant only after intense pressure. Likewise, the glory of Christ shines brightest through the suffering of the cross.

5. The Final Verdict — The Innocent Condemned

The trial reached its climax with a single demand from the crowd: “Crucify Him!”

Pilate gave in. The innocent was condemned. From a human perspective, this was a complete failure of justice. Every system—religious, political, and social—had failed. Truth was rejected, justice was compromised, and innocence was ignored.

But heaven saw something entirely different.

Acts 2:23 declares that Jesus was handed over according to God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge. This was not an accident. It was not a defeat. It was divine purpose.

2 Corinthians 5:21 explains the meaning: “God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” The innocent Savior took upon Himself the guilt of the world.

Even in history, we see glimpses of how God can use injustice for greater purposes. William Tyndale was executed for translating the Bible into English. His final prayer was that God would open the king’s eyes. Within a few years, the Bible was widely available in English. What seemed like defeat became victory. In a far greater way, the death of Jesus accomplished salvation for the entire world.

Conclusion: From Injustice to Redemption

At the trial of Jesus Christ, everything that could go wrong did go wrong:

- Truth was rejected
- Justice was compromised

The innocent was condemned

Yet through this very injustice, God accomplished His greatest work.

The cross stands as proof that even when humanity does its worst, God brings about His greatest good. What appeared to be defeat became victory. What looked like tragedy became salvation.

This trial was not just a historical event—it is a personal challenge.

The same question still stands today:

Barabbas or Jesus? Rebellion or redemption?

The trial that changed history still demands a deci-

sion.

Because the greatest injustice in history became the greatest act of redemption.

David Rouse

Hyderabad, Telangana, India

You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us.”

From *Mere Christianity*

C. S. Lewis

Science Catches Up

It has been almost 500 years since Nicolaus Copernicus published his groundbreaking work on “heliocentrism”, the idea that the sun is the center of the solar system. Most of us today say, “Yeah, so what?” to such an idea. In his day, however, that idea was highly controversial. Some argued vehemently that the Scriptures teach that the earth is the center of the universe. 100 years later Galileo Galilei was convicted of grave heresy for propagating Copernicus’ ideas, and was sentenced to house arrest for the rest of his life.

Sometimes religious folks have been slow to acknowledge truth that has been discovered by science. That’s not to say the Bible actually supports antiquated or false notions; it doesn’t. But many have been the clashes between religious adherents and scientific proponents.

In recent weeks, however, there have been announcements of “findings” by researchers that show science sometimes is the one catching up. Facts known long ago are now being verified by

empirical methods. We should note, at least briefly, the nature of these findings.

On November 3 of this year, for example, NPR.org reported a study published in the November 2008 edition of “Pediatrics”. Researchers from the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research firm, interviewed 2003 boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 17. These young people were asked specific questions about their television viewing habits, particularly of those programs which show scenes laced with sexual innuendo.

The four-year study found that those young people who were in the 90th percentile of watching such suggestive programming were nearly twice as likely as those in the 10th percentile to have gotten pregnant or gotten someone else pregnant. One conclusion from the study is that television viewing is “strongly connected” with teen pregnancy, regardless of other factors that might be considered.

Anita Chandra, a behavioral scientist at RAND, stated that exposure to sex on television helps create the perception that there is little risk to engaging in sex without contraceptives. Furthermore, she observed, the amount of sexual content on television programming has doubled in recent years.

David was a man who lived in Israel about 3,200 years ago. He observed nature and people, and came up with some pretty astute findings himself. One of those is recorded in Psalm 101:3: "I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me." About 2,000 years ago, Paul stated the truth in these words: "Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits'" (1 Corinthians 15:33). In both of these statements, one can easily learn the dangers of watching things that are not wholesome. Today science is catching up.

A second study appeared in "HealthDay News" on November 26 of this year. "Religion may help extend your life" read the headline. That claim was based on a study by the Women's Health Initiative, a study based on 95,000 women between the ages of 50 and 79. One finding of the study was that women who attend religious services at least weekly show a 20% lower risk of death, while those who attend less than once a week had a 15% lower risk.

What's behind this improvement of life expectancy for people who participate in religious groups? Researchers aren't sure. It may involve the social benefits of being with others; it might point to healthier habits by those who are religious. Another factor is that some are not able to attend religious services because of poor health, which thus contributes to lowered life expectancy. Eliezer Schnall, the study's lead author, described the findings as "intriguing," though he would not go so far as to say religion was therefore a prescription for longer life spans.

Almost 3,000 years ago the prophet Jeremiah had a prescription for the people of Judah: "Thus says the Lord: 'Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls. ...'" (Jeremiah 6:16) In describing the life God commanded as "the good way", the prophet pointed to physical goodness as well as spiritual. Following God's will leads to many blessings in a person's life.

Several centuries later, Jesus stated the reason for His appearance on earth: "... I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Those who have followed Jesus for any length of time will agree: The Christian lifestyle is a far more satisfying way to live. Now, it seems, science is beginning to catch up with what the Bible revealed long ago.

One other study appeared just today. Reported by Maria Cheng, medical reporter for the Associated Press, the story says that happiness is contagious. The study upon which the story is based is being published today by British journal "BMJ" (previously named "British Medical Journal"). A 20-year study in Framingham, Mass. tracked 4,700 people as part of a heart study.

Researchers found that people who are part of social clusters experience greater happiness than those who aren't. The nature of those contacts is important, however: "... each happy friend boosts your own chances of being happy by 9 percent. Having grumpy friends decreases it by about 7 percent." Thus, those who surround themselves with cheerful, upbeat associates are more likely to be happier themselves.

Terms used in the report show the power of good attitudes to spread. "Happiness is like a stampede" said Nicholas Christakis, co-author of the study. "Emotional contagion" is another phrase he used to describe their findings. It all points to the importance of being among friends, and the power of those friendships to affect one another in positive ways.

The term in the Bible that predates this study by 2,000 years is "fellowship". Another might be "edification." Great emphasis is placed on relationships for Christians, and the power of those relationships to help those who need the strength.

Here's an example from Hebrews 12:12-13: "Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed." In writing to his friend Philemon, Paul made this appeal: "Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord." The New Testament's appeal to Christians to assemble together regularly is based on the benefit of being able to exhort one another (Hebrews 10:25).

No, the Bible is not a science book. It does occasionally comment on matters that are scientific, and when it does so it always speaks accurately (a proof of its supernatural origin). God's word is, however, a book about human nature and how humans can live a more abundant life. It's no wonder, therefore, that it demonstrates knowledge ahead of its time.

We applaud true science. The comfortable lifestyle we enjoy has been furnished to us by technological advancements. But when it comes to knowing the best ways to live, science will always be playing catch-up with God's word.

Timothy D Hall
HEM-Lines
December 5, 2008

Wake Up

"He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, 'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.' Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, 'O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.' And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then He came to His disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.'" Matthew 26:39-46

Peter, James, and John slept while Jesus prayed. Later that evening Jesus boldly confronts the mob that came to arrest him while Peter, James and John fled. If they had prayed instead of sleeping, would their response have been different? One thing is certain; they would have been more responsive to the agony of Jesus. Jesus took them with him further into the garden that night and asked them to watch while he prayed.

The word "watch" used here and in many other places in the Bible is a form of the Greek word "gregoreo" and it means "to be awake, to watch". Thayer's Greek Lexicon says that this word means "to live, be alive on earth". Thayer's further states, "Metaphorically, to watch i. e. give strict attention to, be cautious, active: — to take heed lest through remissness and indolence some destructive calami-

ty suddenly overtake one, Matthew 24:42; Matthew 25:13; Mark 13:35,(37); Revelation 16:15; or lest one be led to forsake Christ, Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38; or lest one fall into sin, 1 Thessalonians 5:6; 1 Corinthians 16:13; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 3:2f; or be corrupted by errors, Acts 20:31."

It is important that as Christians we "stay awake and pray" because even though our spirits are often willing and we have good intentions, the flesh is weak and we are prone to fall asleep on the job. Peter is an example for us on this night of Jesus' arrest. After boldly proclaiming that he was ready to die with the Lord, Peter denied the Lord three times. Did Peter remember Jesus' words to him in the garden, "watch and pray"?

It is always amazing to me how we seem to "sleepwalk" through our lives. We see examples of it all around us in these days of pandemic. We will put on a mask and go to the grocery store; we will put on a mask and order take out food; we may even put on a mask and go to a ball game. We can do all those things, but we will not put on a mask and go to the church assembly. Why is that so? Are we asleep? Have we forgotten to watch and pray? I am reminded of a verse from the song "Excuses": "...a backache Sunday morning, and a headache Sunday night, but by work time Monday morning, you're feeling quite all right. Why, one of the children has a cold, pneumonia do you suppose? Why the whole family had to stay home just to blow that poor kid's nose." Are we awake or asleep? Are we watching or are we dozing? Watch and Pray!!

L Scott Gage
Vita E, 2020-10-09



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