

I. Introduction

- A. Imagine traveling back in time to the throne room of a great king. Tall columns line a massive throne room. Polished marble floors, decorated in ornate woven rugs. Beautiful tapestries adorn the walls. And there sits the king. Somber. Glorious. A golden crown upon his head. He is invincible. Righteous. And utterly in control. Soldiers in fine array stand armed to the hilt. They execute the king's justice swiftly, without hesitation.
- B. One by one, the plaintiffs appear before the king. They plead their case. The king decrees his sentence. The soldiers carry it out without remorse.
- C. It's a frightful display of power, and justice, and mercy.
- D. Please set that throne room on the back burner; we'll come back to it.
- E. I grew up in a little church in Chicago. It was on a busy street, and had a small parking lot for maybe a dozen cars. There were yellow frosted windows, and a few window air conditioners. One of them had a little blue sign underneath it. That sign scared me. It scared me too.
- F. It said, "Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4:12). I'll come back to that, too.
- G. Welcome to Part 7 of our series called *Christus Victor: Christ the Victor*. Jesus Christ the Champion you need in the Battle for your life. We are looking at all the major events in the life of Christ. His birth. His childhood. His baptism. Temptation. Calling the Disciples. We looked at his miracles. And last time his teachings.
- H. Our topic today is the Arrest and Trials of Jesus. This part of the story begins in a garden.

II. The Garden

- A. *Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." 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 asleep, 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 26:36-46, NKJV).
- B. This is called the Garden of Gethsemane. It's here that Jesus crosses the point of no return. He activates the sequence that will take him to the Cross. There's no going back.
- C. We have no idea of the horrible cost Jesus had to bear. The Scripture says he "began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed." Sorrowful points to his deep sadness. Deeply distressed points to his deep depression. In fact, this word (one word in Greek, two in English) is the strongest word in the Bible for depression (Thayer). The Garden of Gethsemane was a place of terrible pain for Jesus. A place of unspeakable emotional agony.
- D. The Gospel of Luke adds a heartbreaking detail:
 1. *And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (Luke 22:44, NKJV).*
- E. A medical condition of so much stress that blood seeps out the pores.
- F. He says, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful..." words that mean, "overcome with a death-like grief."
- G. This is *Christus Victor*.
- H. Though he is, was, and always will be fully God... Jesus is also fully human. And in that human nature, he feels a pain deeper than words can describe. All the evils. All the darkness. All the losses and griefs. All the sins and all their consequences of all the race since the beginning is spinning itself into a horrible, painful, frightful ball of awfulness. The weight and the stench and the pain is beginning to settle on him. He knows what is coming, and it almost crushes his heart.
- I. Jesus asked his disciples to wait and to pray. He went off a little distance and fell on his face. He prayed too. Not a little, Now I lay me down to sleep prayer. But it was one of those prayers that wells up from the depths of your being.
 1. *O My Father...* not of his human nature. But of his divine relationship. Though co-equal and co-eternal, the Son was precious to the Father.
 2. *if it is possible...* if there is any other conceivable way of rewinding the devastation caused the fall.
 - a) If there is any other conceivable way saving the world of fallen humankind without
 - b) If there is any other conceivable way for God to make peace with us without creating war within himself...
 - (1) *O my father, if it is possible...*
 3. *let this cup pass from Me...* this suffering. This horrible pain. This enormous price tag on the salvation of the world. He is about to drink to the bottom of the cup of death for the sin of the world, and he dreads it. If ever you doubted the full humanity of Jesus Christ, think of the Garden of Gethsemane. If it is possible, let it pass from me.
 4. *nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will...* in the same breath as the prayer for another option comes the submission to the one option he had already accepted. The Lord Jesus Christ instantly surrendered to the plan of salvation meticulously designed from the foundation of the world.
- J. Three times he prays, and three times, they doze off, and three times Jesus, his soul beaten down the enormity of what is about to happen... three times in that very dark place he forgives them and moves with them in a place of friendship and support.
- K. But now the time has come. He is going to be arrested — he knows it is coming. Jesus says, "See, my betrayer is at hand."

III. *The Arrest*

A. Judas

1. *And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him." Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?" Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him.*
2. There were two systems in play here, one was political—Jesus would stand trial before Roman officials. The other system was religious—Jesus would stand trial before religious officials. That's who arrests him. The chief priests and elders of the people bring the religious police to arrest the Savior of the world.
3. One of the chosen disciples named Judas betrays him with a kiss. Jesus still called him, "friend." He never stopped being a "friend of sinners"—a fact that makes me thankful. Jesus is a friend of all who would be friends with him. Even today, and even you.

B. Protection Declined

1. *And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. "Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? "How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?"*
2. One of the disciples—John 18:10 tells us it was Peter—drew his sword and cut off a guy's ear. Why an ear? Either his aim was bad or the guy was quick. You know he wasn't aiming for the ear. Jesus stopped Peter, and Jesus picked it up, dusted it off, and put it back on (Luke 22:51).
3. When I was a little boy, my church sang a song... "He could have called ten thousand angels, to destroy the world, and set him free. He could have called, ten thousand angels, but he died alone, for you and me."
4. [A Roman legion at this time was about 6,100 soldiers and 726 horsemen—over 6,800 soldiers. Jesus could have called legions of mighty angels but he didn't.
5. This is amazing grace.

C. Criminal Justice System

1. *In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. "But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled. (Matthew 26:47-56, NKJV).*
2. They treated him like a robber.
3. The whole scene is a picture within a picture. Ancient philosophers might call it tragic comedy or tragic irony. We'll dig deeper later.
4. Jesus is arrested and now faces trial. Not one trial, but six. Three religious trials. Three political trails.
5. All the trials violated their own laws. The Religious leaders violated religious law. The Political leaders violated Roman law. Never was there a more unjust action than the arrest, trials, and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

D. The Trials of Jesus

1. *Religious trial before Annas (retired high priest)*
 - a) *Scripture: John 18:13, 19-23*
 - (1) Annas was the high priest, who lost his job. The Romans demoted him, so his son-in-law became officially the high priest. Annas still held a lot of power. He was a thug, and he ran a thuggish dynasty. Even though he wasn't high priest any longer, people still called him that.
 - b) The mob brings Jesus to Annas. His hands are tied behind his back. During this trial, he was punched in the face. This was an illegal trial, at night, without witnesses, without a council present, and with illegal brutality against Jesus.
 - c) Annas sends him to trail number two.
 - b) *Religious trial before Caiaphas (sitting high priest)*
 - a) *Scripture: Mark 14:53-62*
 - (1) This is still at night, maybe 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning. Jewish law absolutely prohibited a trial like this. In this trial, Caiaphas had assembled the council—all the priests and elders and scribes of the Jews.
 - (2) Jesus is still bound before Caiaphas.
 - (a) *But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! "What do you think?" They answered and said, "He is deserving of death." Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, "Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?" (Matthew 26:63-68, NKJV).*
 - (3) Death for blasphemy. Blasphemy means to insult the integrity of God. For Jews, it meant a death penalty. They had two problems:
 - (a) One was that the Jews were under Roman domination, and only Roman authorities could put a person to death.
 - (b) The other problem was that the Romans wouldn't put anybody to death until a legally constituted court of Israel declared him guilty in the light of day.
 - (4) So, bloodied, but unbowed, Jesus is dragged to his third trial.
 - b) *Religious Trail before the Council (all the key religious leaders)*
 - a) *Scripture: Luke 22:66-71*

- (1) This was the shortest of his trails. In broad daylight, finally. The religious leaders bribed witnesses to lie about what Jesus said. They asked Jesus if he is indeed the Son of God. He says yes. And that's all they need. The council sends him off to trial number 4, now before a Roman ruler.
4. *Political Trail before Pontius Pilate (the Roman Regional Governor)*
 - a) *Scripture: John 18:28-40, Matthew 27:11-20*
 - (1) Pilate does not want the hassle of dealing with Jesus. He knows the accusations are false. He knows the religious leaders are motivated by envy. Pilate knows the whole trial of Jesus is a great big lie—a shadowy conspiracy with bribery and false witnesses, and everything about it is the opposite of justice.
 - (2) He wants nothing to do with it. Even his wife sent him a message about a bad dream she had about her husband judging Jesus.
 - (a) *Then Jesus answered, "I am not an earthly king. If I were, my followers would have fought when I was arrested by the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world." Pilate replied, "You are a king then?" "You say that I am a king, and you are right," Jesus said. "I was born for that purpose. And I came to bring truth to the world. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true." "What is truth?" Pilate asked. Then he went out again to the people and told them, "He is not guilty of any crime. (John 18:36-38, NLT).*
 - (3) Pilate speaks from his official tribunal seat. That should have ended it. He wants to let Jesus go, but the Jewish leaders almost riot. So Pilate, the Roman Governor, sends him to a higher court, to Herod, the Roman King of Judea.
 - b) *Remember, this all started the night before, when they arrested him in the Garden of Gethsemane.*
6. *Political Trail before Pilate (sentenced to death)*
 - a) *Scripture: John 19:1-16*
 - (1) *Then Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip. The soldiers made a crown of long, sharp thorns and put it on his head, and they put a royal purple robe on him. "Hail! King of the Jews!" they mocked, and they hit him with their fists. Pilate went outside again and said to the people, "I am going to bring him out to you now, but understand clearly that I find him not guilty." Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said, "Here is the man!" When they saw him, the leading priests and Temple guards began shouting, "Crucify! Crucify!" "You crucify him," Pilate said. "I find him not guilty." The Jewish leaders replied, "By our laws he ought to die because he called himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard this, he was more frightened than ever. He took Jesus back into the headquarters again and asked him, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer. "You won't talk to me?" Pilate demanded. "Don't you realize that I have the power to release you or to crucify you?" Then Jesus said, "You would have no power over me at all unless it were given to you from above. So the one who brought me to you has the greater sin." Then Pilate tried to release him, but the Jewish leaders told him, "If you release this man, you are not a friend of Caesar. Anyone who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar." When they said this, Pilate brought Jesus out to them again. Then Pilate sat down on the judgment seat on the platform that is called the Stone Pavement (in Hebrew, Gabbatha). It was now about noon of the day of preparation for the Passover. And Pilate said to the people, "Here is your king!" "Away with him," they yelled. "Away with him--crucify him!" "What? Crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the leading priests shouted back. Then Pilate gave Jesus to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led him away. (John 19:1-16, NLT).*
 - b) It's really heavy stuff.

IV. *What a Savior*

- A. I already mentioned one of the names the Bible gives to Jesus: Man of Sorrows. In 1875, a hymn writer in Chicago named Phillip P. Bliss, gave us these immortal words:
 1. Man of sorrows what a name
for the Son of God, who came
ruined sinners to reclaim:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!
 2. [Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
in my place condemned he stood,
sealed my pardon with his blood:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!
 3. [Guilty, helpless, lost were we;
blameless Lamb of God was he,
sacrificed to set us free:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!
 4. [He was lifted up to die;
"It is finished" was his cry;

now in heaven exalted high:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

5. [When he comes, our glorious King,
all his ransomed home to bring,
then anew this song we'll sing:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!
a) Christus Victor: the Champion You need in the Battle for Your Life.

B. Tragic, Ironic, Comedy

1. Everything here is literal, actual, and historical. It happened this way to the real man, the God-man, Christ Jesus. I'm going to talk about the literary qualities of this story for a minute, but please don't take that at all to mean that I undermine the historical accuracy of the story.
2. In literature, a *tragedy* is a story in which the central characters cause their own downfall, and any objective observer can see it coming from a mile away. It didn't have to happen.
3. In literature, a *comedy* is a story that doesn't necessarily make you laugh. In literature, it's a story that starts well, descends into darkness, but then rises from the darkness to a happy conclusion.
a) It's U-shaped. It starts up here, plummets down there, but ends back up here, happily ever after.
4. One more. *Tragic irony*, characters in the story do actions that are clearly right to themselves, but clearly wrong to the audience, and it's just a matter of time before the choices backfire.
5. The arrest and trials of Christus Victor are tragedy, comedy, and irony all rolled into one.
6. Let me paint a picture.

V. *The Great Throne Room*

- A. At the beginning, I told you to imagine a great throne room. A hall of justice.
- B. I want to return to that image, but I want to add something to it.
- C. Over in the corner, several little kids are playing. They are the children of the royal court. Very young, four or five or six years old. In their little game, they convene their own court, their own trial, and their own hall of justice. And when they do, who is it that goes on trial, and who is it they find guilty, and who is it they condemn to death, but the young son of the great king.
- D. When Jesus Christ stood, hands bound, face beaten, beard plucked out, a crown of thorns hammered into his head, his back ripped open by a leather whip...
 1. When he stood before Annas, who was really on trial that day?
 2. When he stood before Caiaphas, who was really on trial that day?
 3. When he stood before the Sanhedrin, before Pilate, before Herod, and before the mob that cried, "Crucify him!" just who was the judge and who stood in judgment that day?
a) These judges were insignificant specks of moral filth, setting themselves up in judgment over the infinitely holy, utterly righteous, eternally pure Judge of All Flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ.
(1) How the tables were turned the day each of these men died, and stood before the Judge of Heaven, only to find it was the same Jesus they had judged sitting in judgement over them.
(a) He warned them, though.
 4. It was tragedy, because they brought about their own downfall, and it didn't have to go that way.
 5. It was comedy, because the story went from Christmas to Calvary to Easter and a glory that will dazzle the angels forever.
 6. It was irony because the unrighteousness stood in judgment over the king of righteousness and declared him worthy of death.

VI. *Justice System*

- A. Historians tell us that Pilate's life fell apart, and he died by his own hand. Herod was deposed, and his life fell apart too. He died in great misery in exile and poverty. By the year AD 70, Jerusalem was besieged and the temple destroyed and the people persecuted and killed.
- B. There is a justice system bigger than anything on earth, and God himself balances the scales in the end.
- C. To talk about the arrest and trials of Christ is to talk about a justice system. A Jewish justice system run by corrupt men, yes. A Roman justice system run by corrupt men, yes that too.
- D. But don't forget heaven's justice system. The greatest judges and justices of earth, all the rulers of world history, are toddlers playing games in a corner of heaven's courts.
- E. And if you have Jesus Christ, if you've received him and have been saved, then you have been adjusted and aligned to the justice of God, and acquitted and accepted by the Judge himself.
- F. You have nothing to fear. When he died, justice was served and satisfied. With Jesus Christ, you have all you need. You have nothing to fear. The judge is happy with you. He is your preparation. Dressed in the shimmering robes of Christ, you are ready to meet your God.