

# THE TRIAL OF JESUS CHRIST



ARISTARCHUS VASSILAKOS

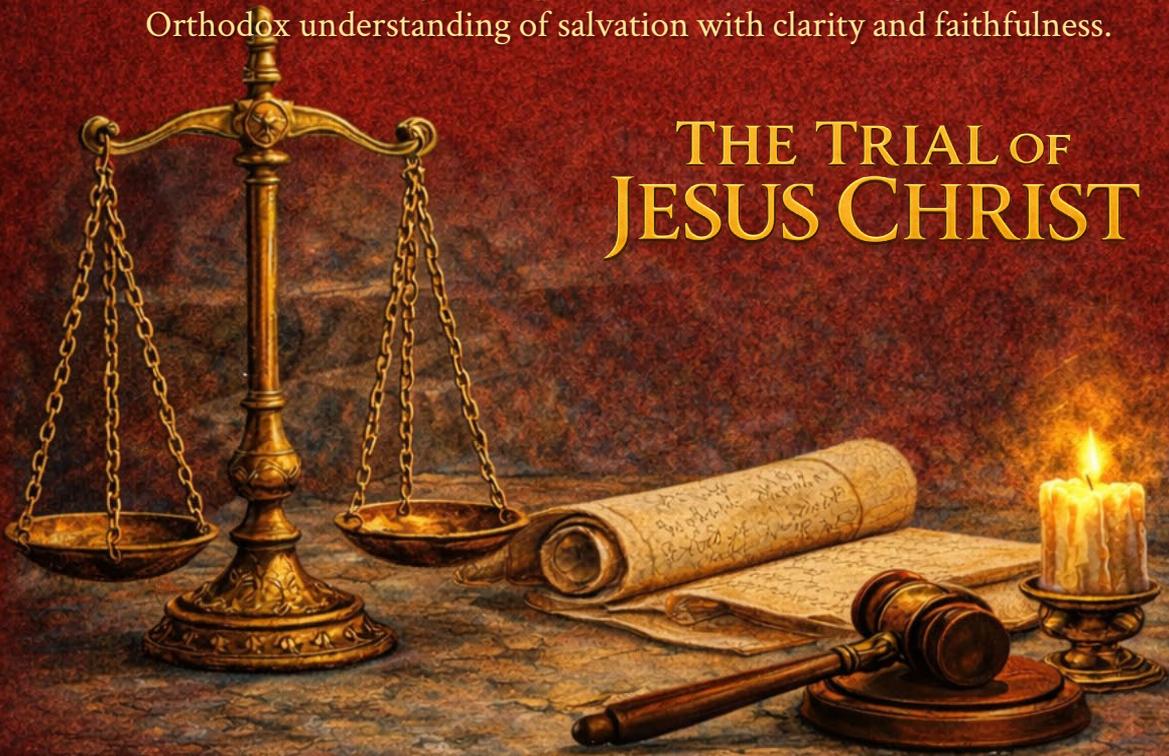
A bold Orthodox reexamination of the Cross as trial,  
injustice, and divine vindication



*“The salvation or perdition of each individual depends upon his freedom to believe in Jesus the Nazarene crucified and risen from the dead.”*

In *The Trial of Jesus Christ*, Abba Aristarchus Vassilakos presents a profound Orthodox meditation on the Passion as the greatest miscarriage of justice in history. Examining Christ’s arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection through the lens of divine law and moral conscience, he challenges speculative theories of satisfaction and instead interprets the Resurrection as God’s public vindication of the Righteous One. Rooted in Holy Scripture and the patristic tradition, this work offers a compelling vision of salvation as liberation from injustice and restoration to life in Christ.

Abba Aristarchus Vassilakos (†1949) was an Orthodox monk, lecturer and theological writer of the early twentieth century. Deeply rooted in Holy Scripture and the patristic tradition, he wrote with intellectual rigor and pastoral concern, seeking to articulate the Orthodox understanding of salvation with clarity and faithfulness.

A still life illustration featuring a pair of ornate brass scales of justice on the left, a rolled-up parchment scroll and a wooden gavel on the right, and a lit candle in a brass holder on the far right. The scene is set against a dark, textured background.

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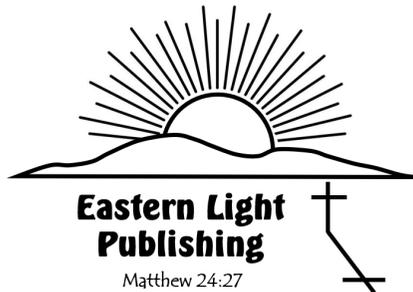
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Aristarchus Vassilakos  
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# The Trial of Jesus

**I. The Unjust Trial and Condemnation of Jesus Christ to the Cross in Accordance With Both Jewish and Roman Law.**

**II. His Just Resurrection After Trial, In Accordance With Theocratic Law, and the Salvation Afforded To Mankind by His Resurrection.**

Aristarchus Vassilakos



Eastern Light Publishing

SHERIDAN, WY

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# The Trial of Jesus Christ

## I

The Unjust Trial and Condemnation of Jesus Christ to the Cross in Accordance With Both Jewish and Roman Law.

## II

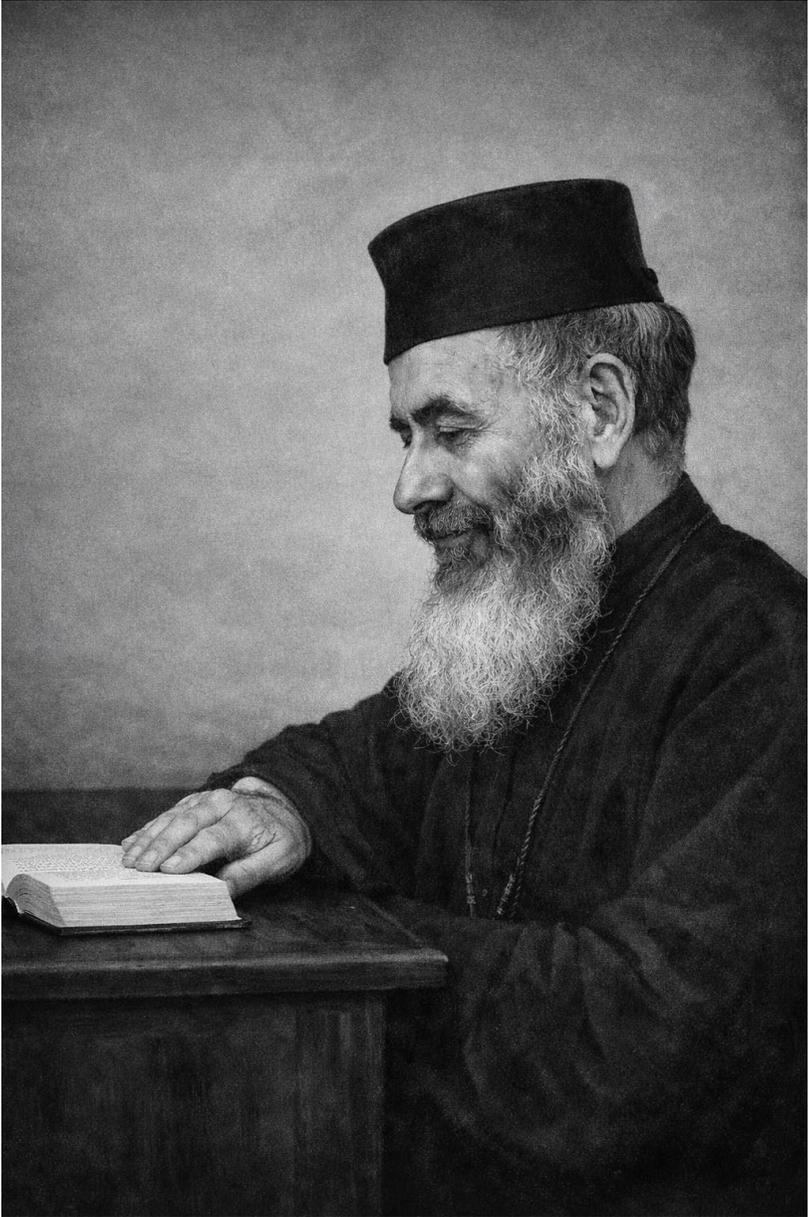
His Just Resurrection After Trial, In Accordance With Theocratic Law, and the Salvation Afforded To Mankind by His Resurrection.



“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up: *That whosoever believeth in him, may not perish; but may have life everlasting.*

For God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting. For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by him. He that believeth in him is not judged. But he that doth not believe is already judged: because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And this is the judgment: because the light is come **into the world** and men loved darkness rather than light: *for their works were evil.* For everyone that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh **not to light**, that his works may not be reprov'd. But he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, because *they are done in God.* (John III: 14-21).



ABBA ARISTARCHUS

# BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

**Aristarchus Vassilakos, theologian, moralist, litterateur, and lecturer, was born in 1873 at Polyaravon in Laconia, Greece, and died November 12, 1949.**

He came to the United States in 1907. In 1908 he attended the soul-saving homilies of John Kyriazis, a teacher of the divine word, and for many years a disciple of Apostolos Makrakis, and became his disciple along with a great many others. He spent his life from childhood to the end in a Christian manner. He preferred celibacy in accordance with the words of the Lord, who said, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matt. 19:12), in order to serve the will of God more effectively and more easily. No one ever accused him of transgressing the moral law. He desired, as does God also, the regeneration and reformation of his nature after the manner and likeness of God. To accomplish this object he performed all the purifying and sanctifying works that the divine law suggests and dictates for our sanctification. These are: 1) sincere repentance with sorrow and tears keeping the will away from every sin; 2) confession of whatever things one has done wrongly, and obtaining their forgiveness by authority of the power to bind and to loose sins, which the Lord granted to His Church (Matt. 16:19); 3) rigorous fasting to control the passions of the flesh and to promote the sobriety of the mind; 4) constant and ceaseless prayer to God begging for His infinite mercy and for the bestowal of His regard upon us; 5) alms according to one's ability to those brethren who are in need and poverty-stricken; 6) continual participation in communion, with fear of God, faith, and love.

Having once forever repented and renounced evil, he engaged in work for Christ by bringing many persons to an appreciation of Christ. He wrote, in addition to such work, the following books: 1) Sacred History from the old and New Testament (for students); 2) Theological

Addresses on Mary the Theotoke and our Lord Jesus Christ, the New Man; 3) The Two Covenants of God with the Human Race, the Old and the New, and the Salvation thereby Prepared for the Human Race, Theologically Considered; 4) Trial of Jesus Christ According to the Jewish and the Roman Law; 5) Concise Divine and Sacred Catechism; 6) The God of Jews and the God of the Christians; and 7) The Papal Primacy, and An Orthodox-Protestant Debate, taken from the works of A. Makrakis, regarding which His Holiness Timothy, Patriarch of Jerusalem, writes: "I offer my fatherly thanks to your beloved and esteemed person for sending us copies . . . of the theological studies entitled Papal Primacy and An Orthodox-Protestant Debate which you have published and which contain much interesting matter. Congratulating you on such spiritual labors, I wish a rich and lasting spiritual return for the enlightenment and benefit of the Orthodox laity, invoking in behalf thereof the grace of the All-holy and Life-receiving Sepulcher of the Lord."

Seeing our brethren Orthodox Christian Greeks coming to the New World, he of sacred memory considered in what way he could be of use to them. Accordingly, in the year 1935 he decided to have the more important works of the great teacher of Christianity, Apostolos Makrakis, of blessed memory, translated into the English language for their benefit, as well as for the purpose of making them known to the English-speaking public in general. So, in the year 1940, the printing of these translations began, and publication of them was continued until his decease and will be continued hereafter by worthy disciples of his.

The admirable work, however, of having the Philosophical System of A. Makrakis translated into English and published in two massive volumes will remain monumental, being a work encomiastically praised by the American press, and in regard to which most favorable criticism and high praise have been expressed by outstanding authorities of both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Churches and by professors of universities and other men of light and leading, among whom the present Ecumenical Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church and former head of the Greek Orthodox Church of America, His Holiness Athenagoras issued an encomiastic and admonitory encyclic in favor of it.

# THE TRIAL OF JESUS CHRIST

## I

THE UNJUST TRIAL AND CONDEMNATION OF  
JESUS CHRIST TO THE CROSS IN ACCORDANCE  
WITH BOTH JEWISH AND ROMAN LAW

## II

HIS JUST RESURRECTION AFTER TRIAL IN AC-  
CORDANCE WITH THEOCRATIC LAW, AND THE  
SALVATION AFFORDED TO MANKIND BY THE  
RESURRECTION

### SCRIPTURAL THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. “And the Lord God planted a garden . . . and every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. . . . And the Lord God commanded Adam, saying, Of every tree of the garden, thou mayest eat for food; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat thereof; in the day thou eat of it thou shalt surely die. (Gen. 2:8-18).

2. A universal law: Everything brought into being has a cause of its coming into being. God alone is causeless, self-existent, and eternal. “All things were made by him (the Word); and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (John 1:3). But God did not create evil, “And God saw that they were good.” (Gen. 1:25). God saw that all things whatever that He had created during the six days were good. Evil and wickedness existed before the creation of the world which took place in six days. Its cause is none other than the apostate from God known as the archangel Lucifer. Out of envy against the Word, because He did not make him equal to Himself, Lucifer abused his own

freedom and refused to submit to the Word together with the angels under him. Ever since then he has become an enemy and foe of the Word, being in fact father of falsehood and the inventor of every evil and wickedness. But he was left free to oppose the Word for the interest of the angelic world and of subsequent mankind until such time as the Word may, after a judicial trial, bind him in the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:1-4), and ultimately he shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, which is none other than hell everlasting (Rev. 20:10).

3. The two superb trees in the midst of the garden of Paradise symbolized the Word (the tree of life) and the Devil (the tree of knowledge of good and evil). It was on this account that God prohibited Adam and Eve on pain of death from eating of the fruit of the tree of the Devil. These trees had as their *raison d'être* (i.e. purpose) the advancement and perfection of the first-created by conducting them from the image to the likeness of God, had they not made an evil use of their freedom to disobey God and to obey the Devil.

4. "But the serpent was the most subtle of all the wild beasts which the Lord God had created upon the earth. And the serpent said unto the woman, What if God did say, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, Of every tree of the garden we shall eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said to the woman, Ye shall not surely die. For God well knoweth that in the day ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes to look at, and that it was fine to comprehend; and taking of its fruit she ate, and gave also unto her husband with her, and they did eat. And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they discerned that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. (Gen. 3:1-7).

5. The subtlety of the serpent (Devil) consists in falsehood, deceit, fraud, calumny, and every other wickedness. Instead of fighting the "image of God," Adam, he fights the "ectype of the image," Eve — and by means of the ectype he succeeded in spoiling the image (or original type). To begin with, he asks her: "Why did God tell you not to eat of all the fruits of the trees of the Garden?" He lies knowingly, the wicked wretch, feigning ignorance. With a curiosity to learn why God had prohibited the food of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Eve replied conscientiously and confessed to the stranger all the truth. She said: "God told us to eat of all the fruits of the trees of the garden; only of one tree that is in the midst of the garden, He said not to eat of that, nor even to touch it, 'lest we die.' God did not say 'lest ye die,' but 'ye shall surely die' (the construction of the original text shows that this sentence meant that there is but one death that will cause you to

die). The fall of Eve began as soon as she touched (consented to) conversation with the stranger, called in Bible the Serpent. Wherefore she said to him, 'lest ye die.' But the crafty Serpent, upon being convinced that she would listen to him and be persuaded by what he said, tells her that they shall not die by saying, "Ye shall not surely die," and that God knew well enough that as soon as they ate of that tree their eyes would be opened, and they would be like gods, able to recognize good and evil. The Evil One accuses God of being envious and at the same time lying to the creatures His hands had formed. Having been disconcerted by means of false reasons and reasonings, and seeing the fruit of the tree to be fine and good for food, and lured by the thought that they would become gods, knowing good and evil, and taking of the fruit thereof she ate, and gave also to her husband, who was near her, and they both ate. But instead of becoming gods knowing good and evil, they discerned that they were naked, and overcome with shame they sewed fig leaves together in order to cover up their nakedness.

6. God foreknew that all these things would happen, but He refrained from interfering with the free action of the first-created and of the Serpent, once He had made them free. He does put in His appearance, however, after the transgression of the divine law, in order to try the transgressors judicially with due regard to their transgression. God's omnipotence, His righteousness and goodness, all demand that the law He had laid down should be observed to the letter and to a tittle. That is why it has been written: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." and "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Gal. 6:7; Heb. 10:31).

7. First of all He gives Adam and Eve a judicial hearing. Adam, on his part, by way of justifying himself says: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." "And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Both of them offer inexcusable excuses. For in violation of the law's threat that they would die in the day that they might eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they disobeyed God, and obeyed the Serpent, who for the first time had spoken to them, and against God and their Father. God enforces the law without pity upon them that sin. To begin with, He condemns the Serpent without granting him a hearing, because he sinned knowingly and with malice aforethought began counteracting God with a penchant for wickedness and with the object of frustrating God's design: "Let us make man in our image and after our likeness." (Gen. 1:26).

### **The Sixth Word of Jesus from His Pulpit**

*"It is finished."*

69. This word is also mentioned by the Evangelist John, who says: "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished." (John 19:30). What was finished? There was finished on the part of Jesus the best and most righteous work and on the part of the Devil the worst and most unlawful. The work was finished which God gave Jesus to do on the earth, the work of reconciling and pacifying God by sacrifice offered in propitiation, the voluntary death in behalf of sinners of the faultless and sinless Jesus, through whom is overthrown the Devil who has dominion over death. The best work of saving men was finished on the part of Christ the Savior, the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep. The work of the Devil also was finished, the worst, the most unlawful, and the most unrighteous against the faultless and righteous Son of God, in order that he might come to a wretched end at the hands of righteous God, who renders to each person according to his works. Jesus, voluntarily being crucified and dying on the Cross, obeys God according to the highest degree of obedience, by sacrificing His own life in behalf of His friends, and thus consummating the most moral and most beneficial work of virtue both for Himself and for all those loving Him. The Devil, on the other hand, who crucified and slew Him by means of calumny and slander, is perpetrating a crime involving the highest degree of criminality, because He is slaying the Son of God unlawfully and unjustly, because he is depriving One of honor, life, and property who is entitled to have them for ever, and because he is attacking the justice of God in consummating the greatest wrong against the Son of God. A twofold work was finished upon Golgotha, whereby the two contrary and opposed workers are distinguished as such, the One being the head and leader of virtue and the other being the ruler and follower of vice: truth and falsehood, faith and faithlessness, of which faith saves the believer, while faithlessness brings punishment to the faithless together with the archcriminal called the Devil.

### **The Seventh Word of Jesus from His Pulpit**

*"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."*

70. This word is mentioned by the Evangelist Luke, who says: "And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the middle. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he expired." (Luke 23:44-46). Matthew says: "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit." (Matt.

27:50). John, after the words “It is finished,” says: and he bowed his head, and gave up the spirit.” (John 19:30).

71. Just as the body without the soul is dead, so the soul without the spirit is also dead. Accordingly, just as a man’s soul without a spirit is something which is naturally impossible to form a conception of and which cannot possibly exist as such in nature, so a man’s spirit without a soul is naturally inconceivable and incapable of existence. Hence it is to be concluded that the spirit is the life of the soul and of the body, being united with and inseparable from the soul.

72. The loud voice of Jesus is proportionate to the intense pain which He felt while hanging on the Cross, and, as the Prophet-king says, “His life expired in pain.” Accordingly, bowing His head, He uttered also this word: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” i.e., “my soul and the life of my flesh.”

73. After His seventh utterance from the Cross, Jesus closed that sweetest mouth, which by word alone was wont to fascinate the multitude and succeeded in healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people (Matt. 4:23). The honied miracle-working and life-giving voice which bade paralytics get up and walk, and awakened the dead as from sleep, ceased to be heard. But instead of silent Jesus all creation—heaven and the sun and the earth—replied. The veil of the temple was rent in two from top to bottom, and the earth quaked, and rocks were split apart, and tombs were opened, and the bodies of many sleeping saints stood up, and emerging from their graves after standing up they entered the holy city and appeared to many witnesses. Staring at Jesus, seeing the earthquake and the strange occurrences, the centurion and those with him were frightened exceedingly, and said: “Truly this man was the Son of God.” Yet the law-breaking and callous Pharisees refused to understand, because they were children, of course, whose father was the Devil, and as such partook of his desire and of his crime, and deserved to share his eternal punishment in the lake of fire and brimstone.

74. Such was the glorious end of the war which commenced between Jesus and the Devil from the time of His baptism and which proved to be our salvation—a war in which the One mighty in suffering came off the victor, namely, Jesus, who expired on the Cross, whereas the one defeated and disgraced was the one who had done wrong and acted foolishly, namely, the Devil, who possesses the dominion of death, and the blind tools of his wickedness, the Scribes and Pharisees. The Devil wished to put Jesus to death by sin of Jesus, just as he had long ago put to death the first man formed out of the earth, Adam. But Jesus also desired to put the Devil to death by sin of the Devil, rendering him guilty of the greatest wrong and injustice and iniquity that could be committed, and inflicting upon him judicially the eternal