

The Arrest and Trial Before the High Priest Harmonizing the Gospel Accounts

When attempting to integrate the gospel accounts of Jesus Christ's arrest and trial before the High Priest (Matt 26:1-5, 14-16, 30-75; Mark 14:1-2, 10-11, 26-72; Luke 22:1-6, 31-71; John 18:1-28), several challenges to the sequencing of events naturally emerge.

Many scholars, for many reasons, have come to the conclusion that the trial of Jesus Christ before Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas took place in separate rooms in the same building, and that the denials by Peter occurred concurrently during the trials.

Upper Room

When Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, "You know that after two days the Passover (Passover and Festival of Unleavened Bread – Mark 14:1a, Feast of Unleavened Bread – Luke 22:1) is coming, and the Son of Man is to be handed over for crucifixion." (Matt 26:1-2; Mark 14:1a; Luke 22:1)

At that time the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the courtyard of the high priest named Caiaphas; and they plotted together to arrest Jesus covertly and kill Him. But they were saying, "Not during the festival, otherwise a riot might occur among the people." (Matt 26:3-5; Mark 14:1b-2; Luke 22:2)

And Satan entered Judas, the one called Iscariot, who belonged to the number of the twelve. (Luke 22:3; Matt 26:14)

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them. (Mark 14:10; Luke 22:4)

and said, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" And they set out for him thirty pieces of silver. (Matt 26:15; Luke 22:4)

And they were delighted, and agreed to give him money. And so he consented, and began looking for a good opportunity to betray Him to them away from the crowd. (Luke 22:5-6; Matt 22:16; Mark 14:11)

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded to sift you men like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith will not fail; and you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You both to prison and to death!" But He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me." (Luke 22:31-34)

And He said to them, "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No, nothing." And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me: 'And He was counted with wrongdoers'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment." They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough." (Luke 22:35-38)

Mount of Olives

And (after singing a hymn – Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26) He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him. (Luke 22:38-39; Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26; John 18:1a)

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Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.' But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." (Matt 26:31-34; Mark 14:27-30)

But Peter kept saying insistently, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all were saying the same thing also. (Mark 14:31; Matt 26:35)

Garden of Gethsemane

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray (He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation – Luke 22:40)." (Matt 26:36; Mark 14:32; Luke 22:40; John 18:1b)

And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed (very distressed and troubled – Mark 14:33). Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." (Matt 26:37-38; Mark 14:33-34)

And He went a little beyond them (withdrew from them about a stone's throw – Luke 22:41), and fell to the ground (knelt down – Luke 22:41) and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You (if it is possible – Matt 26:39); remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will." (Mark 14:35-36; Matt 26:39; Luke 22:41-42)

Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. (Luke 22:43-44)

When He rose from prayer, (Luke 22:45a)

And He came and found them sleeping (from sorrow – Luke 22:45b), and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you (you men – Matt 26:40) not keep watch for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Mark 14:37-38; Matt 26:40-41; Luke 22:45b-46)

He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done." Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy (and they did not know what to answer Him – Mark 14:40). (Matt 26:42-43; Mark 14:39-40)

And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. Then He came to the 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. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!" (Matt 26:44-46; Mark 14:41-42)

Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. (John 18:2-3)

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While He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, who came from the chief priests (and the scribes – Mark 14:43) and elders of the people. (Matt 26:47; Mark 14:43; Luke 22:47a)

So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" (John 18:4)

Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him." Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, "Hail, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. (Matt 26:48-49; Mark 14:44-45; Luke 22:47b)

But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48)

They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am He." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. So when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. (John 18:5-6)

Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus answered, "I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way," to fulfill the word which He spoke, "Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one." (John 18:7-9)

And Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you have come for." Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him. (Matt 26:50; Mark 14:46)

When those who were around Him saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" (Luke 22:49)

Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus. (John 18:10; Matt 26:52; Mark 14:47)

Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place (into the sheath – John 18:11a); for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword ("Stop! No more of this – Luke 22:51). (Matt 26:52; Luke 22:50-51; John 18:11a)

"Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way (the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it – John 18:11b)?" (Matt 26:53-54; John 18:11b)

Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber? While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours." (Luke 22:52-53; Matt 26:55; Mark 14:49a)

"But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets." Then all the disciples left Him and fled. (Matt 26:56; Mark 14:49b-50)

A young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him. But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked. (Mark 14:50-52)

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So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, and led Him (away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together - Matt 26:57; Mark 14:53) to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. (John 18:12-13; Matt 26:57; Mark 14:53)

Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people. (John 18:14)

Jesus before Annas

Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. (John 18:15-16; Matt 26:58; Luke 22:54)

Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself. (John 18:18; Mark 14:54; Luke 22:55)

As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came (who kept the door – John 18:17), and seeing Peter warming himself (seeing him as he sat in the firelight – Luke 22:56), she looked at him (looking intently at him – Luke 22:56) and said, "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene (you too were with Jesus the Galilean – Matt 26:69, you are not also one of this man's disciples, are you – John 18:17)." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about (I am not – John 18:17)." And he went out onto the porch. (Mark 14:66-68; Matt 26:69-70; Luke 22:56-57; John 18:17)

The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said." When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. (John 18:19-24)

A little later, another (when he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl – Matt 26:71) saw him (Simon Peter was standing and warming himself – John 18:25) and said, "You are one of them too (this man was with Jesus of Nazareth – Matt 26:71)!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not (I do not know the man – Matt 26:72)!" (Luke 22:58; Matt 26:71-72; Mark 14:69-70a; John 18:25)

Jesus before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin

Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. (Mark 14:55-56; Matt 26:59)

They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God (made with hands – Mark 14:58) and to rebuild it (made without hands – Mark 14:58) in three days.'" (Matt 26:60-61; Mark 14:57-58)

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Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent. (Mark 14:59)

The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" (Mark 14:60; Matt 26:62)

And they were saying many other things against Him, blaspheming. (Luke 22:65)

But Jesus kept silent And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God (Son of the Blessed One – Mark 14:61)." (Matt 26:63; Mark 14:61)

When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council chamber, saying, "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer. But from now on THE SON OF MAN WILL BE SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE power OF GOD (and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN – Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62)." And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am (You have said it yourself – Matt 26:64)." (Luke 22:66-70; Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62)

Tearing his clothes (tore his robes – Matt 26:65), the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses (of testimony – Luke 22:71)? You have heard the blasphemy (heard it ourselves from His own mouth – Luke 22:71); how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. (Mark 14:63-64; Matt 26:65-66; Luke 22:71)

Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him (officers received Him with slaps in the face – Mark 14:65, they spat in His face – Matt 26:67), and they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, "Prophecy, who is the one who hit You?" (Luke 22:63-64; Matt 26:67-68; Mark 14:65)

After about an hour had passed, another man (bystanders came up – Matt 26:73, one of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off – John 18:26) began to insist, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too (Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away – Matt 26:73, Did I not see you in the garden with Him – John 18:26)." (Luke 22:59; Matt 26:73; Mark 14:70b; John 18:26)

But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about (I do not know the man – Matt 26:74)." Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:60-62; Matt 26:74-75; Mark 14:71-72; John 18:27)

Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" (John 18:28-29)