

Lesson 53

**Time – 4/2/30 to 4/3/30 A.D., 14 Nisan
Very Early Wednesday Morning
The Trials of Jesus**

The Trials before the High Priest and Sanhedrin

In the last lesson we studied the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and His arrest by the Jewish religious establishment. We noted that at that time, the Romans were not involved. We also studied the Messianic Psalm 109. We begin this lesson with His conveyance by His Jewish guards to the courtyard of the High Priest.

The crowd bound Jesus and took Him to the courtyard of the High Priest (see map on last page), where the High Priests proceeded before them. Those of the Sanhedrin who hadn't accompanied the arresting party to Gethsemane were quickly gathered. Undoubtedly those who had been excluded were those who were suspected as having some sympathy with Jesus. As Jesus was led away, John and Peter must have followed behind in the darkness. Both must have arrived at the entrance to the courtyard at about the same time. It is logical to assume that Peter and John either arrived together or that Peter arrived just before John, since when John entered he knew Peter was waiting at the gate. Neither of them could have been too far back from the group that had taken Jesus, as they probably learned its destination by keeping its torches in sight through the winding and narrow streets of Jerusalem. What is called "the courtyard of the High Priest" must have been common to both the houses of Annas and Caiaphas. As we know from Josephus, Annas was one of the wealthiest and most influential men in Jerusalem. He had served as officiating High Priest from 6 AD to 14 AD. In 18 AD he had procured the post of officiating High Priest for his son-in-law Caiaphas. At this time (30 AD), it is almost certain that he and Caiaphas were the only living High Priests.¹ In the next 40 years before the destruction of Jerusalem, he saw to it that five of his sons served as High Priest. It is evident he

¹ *According to the Law of Moses there could only be one High Priest, who served until his death. However, beginning with the corrupt reign of Herod the Great, that came to an end. The office of High Priest became a temporary political prize that was passed from person to person as political advantage shifted. At that time there were serving High Priests, and former High Priests. All were called "High Priest" for the remainder of their lifetimes, and they all retained positions of authority in the Sanhedrin. Later, during the time of Acts, there were as many as seven living High Priests. Only the serving High Priest officiated in that office in the Temple. During the time of Christ's ministry, Caiaphas was the serving High Priest, and Annas was an honorary High Priest. During the previous 30 years of Christ's life there had been seven different men appointed as High Priest. The historical record of Josephus doesn't say definitely how many of them were still alive in 30 A.D., but according to the Biblical record, only Annas and Caiaphas were still active.*

led a tight patriarchal family and he was the patriarch. In such a family, it would not seem unusual that Annas had Caiaphas living next door under his watchful eye.

We begin with the verse where we finished in the last lesson.

John 18:12-13 ~~Then the detachment of soldiers~~ *company*² with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the High Priest that year.

Matthew 26:57 Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas, the High Priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled.

Mark 14:53 They took Jesus to the High Priest, and all the ~~chief priests~~ *High Priests*,³ elders and teachers of the law came together.

Luke 22:54 Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the High Priest.

Since we saw in the last lesson that Annas and Caiaphas had been part of the arresting party, they must have gone before them back to the common courtyard that both Annas and Caiaphas shared.

John 18:14 Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people.

This referred to what Caiaphas had said ignorantly, but prophetically, under the prompting of the Holy Spirit. As an unbelieving High Priest, he had a worldly meaning in mind when he said it. He was excusing their pursuit of Jesus' life because he felt that Jesus threatened the religious supremacy of the Sanhedrin. He reasoned that if that supremacy fell, the Romans would rule alone, and it would be bad for the Jews. However, the Holy Spirit had been using the office of Caiaphas to speak a Spiritual truth. That Spiritual truth was that Jesus had been intended to die and be the true atoning sacrifice which the LORD had promised since the time of Adam's fall. The true Spiritual duty of Caiaphas as the Levitical High Priest had always been to point toward the fulfillment of that promise. This is the record of what he had said:

² The Greek word here is *σπεῖρα* {spā'-rā}. It simply means a band or company. As we explained in the last lesson, this was a mixed crowd that included the two High Priests, some of the Sanhedrin, their servants, and some of the Temple Guard. There were no Roman soldiers at this point.

³ The word which is used for "High Priest" is *ἀρχιερεύς* {är-khē-e-ryü's}. Here we have *ἀρχιερεῖς* which is the plural of that word. Whenever English translations of the Gospels use the words "chief priests" they should be using the words, "High Priests."

John 11:50-52 “‘You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.’ He did not say this on his own, but as High Priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.”

Ironically, the thing that the worldly Caiaphas feared, the destruction of their government and their nation, was brought on by their rejection of Jesus.

John 18:15a Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus.

Matthew 26:58a But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the High Priest.

Mark 14:54a Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the High Priest.

Luke 22:55a Peter followed at a distance.

Only John’s Gospel tells us that “another disciple” followed behind. They undoubtedly followed close enough to keep the torches of the party in sight as they made their way back to the High Priest’s house. We know that the other disciple was John. Peter and John were inseparable. They had been partners in fishing, and they were both part of “the Three” that Jesus kept closest to Himself. In the early years of the Church they often ministered together.

John 18:15b-16 Because this disciple was known to the High Priest, he went with Jesus into the High Priest’s courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple,⁴ who was known to the High Priest,⁵ came back, spoke to the girl⁶ on duty there and brought Peter in.

This indicated how closely Peter and John were following the arresting party. I expect that when Peter and John arrived at the courtyard gate, John saw the High Priest, probably Annas, in the common courtyard and called out to him asking for permission to enter. It says that John gained entry because “he was known to the High Priest.” What does this mean? How did Annas know John? He may have known who John was because Annas remembered him as one of Jesus’ main disciples who he had seen with Jesus only a few days before. He may also have known John through some personal connection. What the true basis was for this familiarity can only be a matter of conjecture. The next question is -- Why should this familiarity be a basis of

⁴ John

⁵ Which High Priest, Annas or Caiaphas? It doesn’t say. I expect it was Annas who seems to have remained outside until the whole party had arrived and rerouted Jesus into a personal interview with him. Evidently, at the same time he included John who was able to witness the interview.

⁶ The fact that there was a girl guarding the gate seems to tell us that the High Priests had taken every male servant that they could spare to arrest Jesus.

John's admittance? There are several reasons that spring to mind. The High Priest may have wanted to have John where he could be watched, rather than out somewhere raising trouble. He may also have wanted one of Jesus' disciples close by where he could lay his hands on him. It is also possible that the High Priest recognized that, as Jesus' first cousin, John had a right to witness the trial on behalf of Jesus' family. Whatever the reason for John's admittance, after he was admitted John was also able to procure entry for Peter (probably from the High Priest).

John 18:18 **It was cold,⁷ and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.**

Matthew 26:58b **He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.**

Mark 14:54b **There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.**

Luke 22:55b **But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them.**

It is worth remembering that the people that were sitting around the fire with Peter were the same Temple Guards who had arrested Jesus in the garden. They probably numbered at least twenty or thirty, so Peter was able to slip in among them without being noticed. Some of them had seen Peter strike Malchus, the High Priest's servant, and threaten them. Peter was certainly aware of this, although most of the guards were probably not aware. Peter had drawn his sword in the obscure light of the garden. While Peter sat down, outside in the courtyard, it seems that John was allowed to accompany Jesus into the trial before Annas.

Peter's First Denial

John 18:17 **"You are not one of his disciples, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, "I am not."**

Matthew 26:69 **Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl⁸ came to him. "You also⁹ were with Jesus of Galilee," she said. But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said.**

Mark 14:66-68 **While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the High Priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, "You also¹⁰**

⁷ *The average low temperature for that time of the year in Jerusalem is in the low 40's. In the early morning, before daybreak is usually the coldest time of the day.*

⁸ *Obviously, this was the girl who had been at the gate.*

⁹ *She knew that John, who had gotten him into the courtyard, was Jesus' disciple, so it followed that Peter was too.*

¹⁰ *See previous note.*

were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." But he denied it, saying, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about." NRSV

Luke 22:56-57 A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him." But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said.

John tells us that it was the girl who had who admitted both John and Peter through the gate who questioned Peter first. Something about the negotiation between John and the High Priest had informed her that Peter was also a disciple of Jesus. She had almost certainly not been to Gethsemane with the arresting party. After all the men had come back, she was probably relieved of sentry duty at the door by a man. Evidently, as she was walking through the courtyard, she saw Peter settled down around a fire in the courtyard with the same Temple Guards and servants who had seen him in the Garden of Gethsemane. She then asked Peter "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" At this point Peter probably wasn't afraid. He had merely told a "small lie" (he must have said to himself) to ensure he could remain close by to his Lord. Peter denied that he was a disciple. He simply said "I am not." Possibly something about Peter's reaction confirmed the servant girl's suspicion. She pressed him, this time with the full attention of the others saying, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee." Peter reacted more vociferously, "I don't know or understand what you're talking about." She then turned to the others and told them, "This man was with him." At that point his final response was a vociferous "Woman, I don't know him." This encounter was his first denial!

Jesus' Trial before Annas

Before Peter's first denial, Jesus had been taken, still bound, into the house of Annas, the religious "Godfather" of Jerusalem. His house seems to have shared the courtyard with that of his son-in-law Caiaphas. Only John recorded the interview with Annas. It seems likely that John himself was an eyewitness to this interview.

John 18:19 Meanwhile, the High Priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

Both Annas and Caiaphas were called "High Priest" (Luke 3:2). John 18:24 makes it clear that this High Priest was Annas. Why did Annas have this confrontation with Jesus and ask these questions? He certainly was fully aware of what Jesus had taught. Perhaps his main interest in questioning Jesus here was to discover what trouble they might expect from Jesus' disciples. There were probably at least a million Jews encamped around Jerusalem and a large part of them had swarmed around Jesus the previous Sunday to welcome him to the city. It made Jerusalem seem like a tinderbox and the Jews were notorious for rioting.

John 18:20 "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret.

All Jesus gave him was the same response as He had given at the Garden when they had arrested Him (Matthew 26:55, Mark 14:49, Luke 22:53).

John 18:21 Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.”

Jesus was well aware that ever since the Feast of Tabernacles six months before, the Sanhedrin had spies following Him and questioning Him, trying to find a valid charge to bring against Him.

John 18:22 When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. “Is this the way you answer the High Priest?” he demanded.

Jesus’ answer seems to have struck the official of the High Priest as an impertinence before such an august person as Annas. The official undoubtedly owed his position to Annas. It should be noticed that the record does not say that Annas told the official to strike.

John 18:23 “If I said something wrong,” Jesus replied, “testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?”

Jesus was just pointing out to the official that what he had just done was a serious breach of legal protocol. Of course, everything about that interview and the Jewish trial before the Sanhedrin that followed was a serious breach of Jewish legal protocol.

John 18:24 Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the High Priest.

Perhaps part of the reason the Annas may have had John admitted to this interview was that it constituted an implied threat that if he wasn’t satisfied with Jesus’ answers, he had one of Jesus’ disciples within his reach. For almost six months, ever since the Feast of Tabernacles, the Sanhedrin had informers following Jesus’ every move and trying to provoke Him into making a slip. After Jesus had entered Jerusalem earlier in the week, the most brilliant of the scribes and Pharisees had followed Him in the Temple, asking Him provocative questions. Perhaps, this interview was a demonstration of Annas’ overweening ego. Perhaps he felt that **he** could succeed where all his subordinates had failed. Again, we can only speculate on Annas’ motivations. During the interrogation, Annas failed, and Jesus was struck violently. Afterward Jesus was taken across the courtyard to Caiaphas’ house where court was to be held. He was still bound as He was led into the court. That was also against Jewish courtroom procedure. There the Sanhedrin had been called for a secret and illegal trial. Normally, the Sanhedrin was supposed to meet in a chamber which abutted the Temple proper on the Temple Mount.¹¹ Most of the members were probably not called until after Jesus was arrested. Remember at least two of the members (Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea) were suspected of being sympathetic to

¹¹ *Ten of thousands of worshippers would be gathering there to have their lambs sacrificed beginning at noon.*

Jesus so the High Priests wanted to keep Jesus' trial a secret as long as possible. It must have taken some time to gather the seventy men who made up the Sanhedrin at that time of night.

Peter's Second Denial

John 18:25 As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not."

Luke 22:58 A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." "**Man, I am not!**"

Matthew 26:71-72 Then he went out to the gateway, where another ~~girl~~ *time* she saw him ¹² and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!"

Mark 14:68b-70a And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed."¹³ And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." But again he denied it. NRSV

Peter relocated himself from beside the fire to the entryway or forecourt. He had already denied Jesus once. At this time the cock crowed for the first time. When we studied Jesus' foretelling of this event in Lesson 51, it was pointed out that it was recorded two ways. In Mark it was recorded that Jesus foretold the third denial as being after the second time a cock crowed. In the other three Gospels, it was recorded only as being after a cock crow. In those accounts, it doesn't say after the first cock crow, but only after a cock crow. The accounts don't contradict each other. Why does Mark's Gospel give a more detailed account? Perhaps it was because Mark had spent a good deal of time in the company of Peter. He had probably heard the more detailed account from Peter's own lips.

Meanwhile, after the first question by the girl gatekeeper Peter had gotten up and gone out to the entryway, near the gate, to escape the questioning eyes of the people in the courtyard. Since the girl who had confronted him earlier had left the gate, it might have seemed like a good place. This time he was first accused by one of the men in the courtyard. He may have been one of those who had just seen Peter strike Malchus in the Garden. He said to Peter, "You also are one of them." Peter replied to him "Man, I am not!" At this point the girl returned and affirmed the man's suspicions saying, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." Peter replied to her "I

¹² The word for "girl" or "maid" is not in the original. The translators evidently put it in as understood. However, the phrase translated "where another girl saw him" could as easily be translated "where another time she saw him." This last translation agrees with picture presented in the other three Gospels.

¹³ Both the Textus Receptus and the Alexandrian Codex Sinaiticus here have the phrase "and the rooster crowed." Some don't.

don't know the man!" This was Peter's second denial. This denial may have taken place as much as an hour after the first. By this point, Peter had probably been subjected to a lot of suspicious and unfriendly looks from the guards. They were probably beginning to suspect that they had seen him in the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter denied Jesus for the second time. However, he was still able to tell himself that the denial was for a good cause and not cowardly. He could tell himself that he was being very brave in being in the courtyard at all.

Meanwhile Jesus was being tried in Caiaphas' palace by the High Priests, elders and teachers of the law. To picture the setting, we must understand that normally, the Sanhedrin met in a special chamber which adjoined the Holy Place at the Temple on the Temple Mount. However large Caiaphas' house was, it probably did not have a room built to accommodate a gathering of this size (seventy men plus) in a forum-like setting. They were probably all crowded around the walls in a chaotic scene.

The first part of the trial before the Sanhedrin – the prosecution witnesses

The Gospel of John doesn't record Jesus' trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin at all. Although John may have been an eyewitness, the other Gospels have long accounts of it. Remember, John's Gospel, which was written last, aimed to fill in the gaps left by the earlier Gospels.

As you may remember, the High Priests had spent much of the previous months trying to get Jesus to say something that would justify the sentence on which they had already determined. They hadn't succeeded. The three most damning things he had done in their eyes weren't against the Mosaic Law. They were:

Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead. This affronted the Sadducees who didn't believe in life after death.

Jesus' attack on the tables of the money changers as being against the message of grace that the Temple was supposed to teach. This offended the High Priests (always Sadducees) as that was their most important money generator.

Jesus' attack on the additions the Pharisees had made to the Mosaic Law.

Of course, they were afraid to bring charges on those counts because they knew they could be exposed in their hypocrisy, not only by Jesus, but by the few pro-Jesus members in their midst.

Matthew 26:59-60a **The chief priests High Priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.**

Mark 14:55-56 ~~The chief priests~~ *High Priests* and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

We know from Luke 22:59 that the trial took at least one hour. I expect it was at least two, considering that they brought forth “many” witnesses. I expect most of the witnesses were among those who had gone to arrest Jesus and were in the employ of the High Priests and the Sanhedrin.

The nature of this testimony fulfilled the prophetic prayer recorded in the Messianic Psalm 55 about this hour: Psalms 55:9a “Confuse the wicked, O Lord, confound their speech.”

Matthew 26:60b-61 Finally two came forward and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

Mark 14:57-59 Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.’” Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

Finally, the best they could come up with was a misquoting of the prophecy that Jesus had made three years before when He had appeared in the Temple. This was the original:

John 2:18-21 “Then the Jews demanded of him, ‘What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple,¹⁴ and I will raise it again in three days.’ The Jews replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple,¹⁵ and

¹⁴ *It was Jesus that was the real Temple. All the stone Temples had only been a shadow of His spiritual Temple. There are several things worth noting in consideration of that fact. If you compare 1 Kings 6:1, 1 Kings 6:37-38, and 1 Kings 11:42-43 you will find that the glory of Solomon’s Temple was destroyed in its 34th year never to be regained. The Temple of Jesus Christ’s body was also destroyed in its 34th year, but it was raised in greater glory in three days. Also, if we compare Ezra 6:15 with Haggai 1:14-15, we see that the Second Temple, the Temple of Zerubbabel was completed in exactly three years, six months, and 7 days after the beginning of its construction (The foundation had been laid some seventeen years before). Three years, six months, and 7 days was the exact length of time of Jesus’ ministry from His baptism on the Day of Atonement in 26 A.D. to His resurrection on the Feast of the Firstfruits in 30 A.D.*

¹⁵ *Jesus went to that Passover in Jerusalem on 14 Nisan 27 A.D. That date is supported by the following facts. According to Josephus, the temple was started in the eighteenth year of Herod the Great’s reign which covered parts of 20 and 19 BC. Although it was not to be completed for another 36 years, according to the Bible, on the occasion of this visit, the Jews told Jesus, the Temple had been under construction for forty-six years. Since neither Josephus, nor the Jews quoted in this passage, are precise, we can only work that out to either 27 BC or 28 BC. [Antiquities of the Jews, Book XV, Chapter 11, Verse 1 “AND now Herod, in the eighteenth*

you are going to raise it in three days?’ But the temple he had spoken of was his body.”

Even then, they couldn’t agree on exactly what Jesus had said. However, they interpreted it to mean that Jesus had intended to raise an insurrection against the Jewish religion. What He had done was to challenge the distortions that the Pharisees had imposed on the truth of the Word of God. God’s truth is always more important than human organizations. Unfortunately, even if they are established with good intentions, human organizations are easily infiltrated by Satan and his agents and become corrupted. The Word of God, however, is incorruptible.

In the same way that the Pharisees became corrupted, the organized churches of our age have become corrupted. For the last two millennia since Christ, evil men have arisen who claim to be Christian. They have waged war for the interests of their organizations over the truth of God’s Word. Men like Wycliffe, Hus, Tyndale, and Luther have suffered persecution and even death for advocating the superiority of the Word of God over the traditions of men.

Note that what Jesus had said in John 2:19 was, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” He had not said “I will destroy”, but “*If you* destroy.” Of course, we know that He was talking about His life and body which they would destroy by killing Him. He would then raise it up. It would fulfill in reality that for which the stone Temple, and the Tabernacle before it, had only been a figure.

The second part of the trial before the Sanhedrin – Jesus’ testimony

Luke 22:66 At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests High Priests and teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them.

The Gospel of Luke skipped the first part of the trial and goes straight to the conclusion. When Luke says He was led before them, it doesn’t mean that was when Jesus was brought into the chamber. He would have been there during all the testimony against Him as we see in the next verses. This just means that was when He was put into the dock to testify. Since it later says ¹⁶ that Jesus was bound again before He was led off to Pilate, He must have been unbound for His testimony. It is said to have been daybreak, not long before Peter’s second denial when the first cock would have crowed.

Matthew 26:62-63a Then the High Priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” But Jesus remained silent.

year of his reign, and after the acts already mentioned, undertook a very great work, that is, to build of himself the temple of God”]

¹⁶ *Matthew 27:2, Mark 15:1*

Mark 14:60-61a Then the High Priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Jesus didn’t even need to answer because the testimony was confused and contradictory. The reasons they wanted to kill Jesus had nothing to do with the Law of Moses.

Matthew 26:63b The High Priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

Mark 14:61b Again the High Priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”

Luke 22:67a “If you are the Christ,” they said, “tell us.”

The High Priest knew there was only one way to get Him to say something which could indict Him of heresy. He asked Jesus if He was the Christ (the Messiah) the Son of God.

Luke 22:67b-68 Jesus answered, “If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer.

Here Jesus referred them to a number of Old Testament passages with which they should have been familiar. If they had cared about the truth, it should have given them a jolt. The passages are listed below:

Isaiah 65:12 “I called but you did not answer, I spoke but you did not listen.”

Jeremiah 7:13 “I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer.”

Jeremiah 7:27 “When you tell them all this, they will not listen to you; when you call to them, they will not answer.”

Jeremiah 35:17 “I spoke to them, but they did not listen; I called to them, but they did not answer.”

Matthew 26:64a “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied.

Jesus then answered in the words He knew they would use to condemn Him.

Matthew 26:64b-65 “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Mark 14:62 **“I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”**

This was a very powerful affirmation of Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah. He said that He was the one who was described in the prophecy of Daniel 7 below:

Daniel 7:13 “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

Luke 22:69 **But, from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”**

The “but” emphasizes that in spite of the fact that after three and a half years of proof, they would not believe or answer His call on earth. Jesus was ready to tell them who He was. Henceforward, He would deal with them from the right hand of God.

Luke 22:70 **They all asked, “Are you then the Son of God?” He replied, “You are right in saying I am.”**

Like a pack of dogs after a prey, the whole assembly could smell blood. They asked Him to repeat His previous assertion that He was the Messiah, the son of God. He did. They had Him.

Matthew 26:66a **Then the High Priest tore his clothes**

Mark 14:63a **The High Priest tore his clothes.**

Unconsciously, in the High Priest’s raging against Jesus, he was breaking the Mosaic Law regarding High Priests. He set in motion the judgment of the LORD against the whole community which came to fruition 40 years later to the day. This was the Ordinance of the High Priesthood in the Law of Moses:

Leviticus 10:6 “Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, ‘Do not let your hair become unkempt, and do not tear your clothes, or you will die and the LORD will be angry with the whole community.’”

Matthew 26:66b **and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” “He is worthy of death,” they answered.**

Mark 14:63b-64 **“Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. “You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” They all condemned him as worthy of death.**

Luke 22:71 **Then they said, “Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips.”**

During all the inaccurate testimony and lies told against Him, Jesus had refused to argue or reply. After all, His public life and teaching was His testimony. He was the Messiah, and the Law of Moses in Deuteronomy had made clear the basis on which true Messiahship was to be established. The Sanhedrin chose to ignore this Law copied below:

Deuteronomy 18:15-22 **“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, ‘Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.’ The LORD said to me: ‘What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death.’ You may say to yourselves, ‘How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?’ If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.”**

They could never challenge Jesus’ teaching on the basis of the Law because they themselves had violated so many of the laws of Moses. They knew He could make them look worthy of death. The very office of the High Priest was being held contrary to the Law of Moses. The assembly couldn’t discredit His life because He was truly sinless. For years, they had been trying to attack His healing on the Sabbath and He had made them look foolish. They didn’t even bring up the issue here. Most of Jesus’ prophecies about the future were made in private to the twelve. The one prophecy He had made publicly was in the process of being fulfilled before their eyes. That prophecy was:

Luke 17:25 **“But first he (*Jesus, the son of Man*) must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.”**

They might have made an argument that Jesus was a false prophet if ever He had said “Be healed?” or “Rise and walk?” and it hadn’t happened. The best they could come up with was to falsely claim that he had said **“I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.”** To meet the criterion of Moses, they would have had to destroy the Temple and see if He could rebuild it in three days. Of course, we know that it was **they** who were truly about to destroy the Temple that Jesus, the carpenter son of David, had

really been speaking about. It was the Temple of His life. Jesus would raise that Temple up in three days.

The hope of the High Priests must have been that they could get Him to defend Himself, and then the body of them would attack Him verbally, confuse Him, and break Him down. He refused to play their game and remained silent. In this Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

Isaiah 53:7 “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet **he did not open his mouth**; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”

Finally, the frustrated Caiaphas asked the question they had been afraid to ask because they knew Jesus had passed every test of the Law of Moses. “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” Jesus answered in the affirmative and basically said that He was the one prophesied in Daniel. This was more than the High Priest could take. The sham of a trial was abandoned, and Caiaphas demanded the death of Jesus. In doing so, he himself, violated the ordinance of the High Priesthood by ripping his robe.¹⁷ Jesus was taken out into the courtyard to await the final sentencing. Then the council, knowing they had no valid charge, undoubtedly discussed the best plan to get Pilate to do what they wanted him to do which was to crucify Him.

Mark 14:65a **Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, “Prophecy!”**

Matthew 26:67-68 **Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him and said, “Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit you?”**

Evidently, even before Jesus was taken out of the tightly packed room, some members of the Sanhedrin stepped forward to get their personal revenge.

The third part of the trial before Caiaphas - the deliberation.

We don't have a record of the deliberation, but it must have included the details of when they would take Jesus to Pilate, who would be in the delegation, and what their strategy would be to get Pilate to put Jesus to death.

Outside in the Courtyard with the Condemned Prisoner

¹⁷ Besides Leviticus 10:6 which was copied above there is also Leviticus 21:10 “The High Priest, the one among his brothers who has had the anointing oil poured on his head and who has been ordained to wear the priestly garments, must not let his hair become unkempt or tear his clothes.” Also see Joel 2:13.

Mark 14:65a **And the guards took him and beat him.**

Luke 22:63-65 **The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. They blindfolded him and demanded, “Prophecy! Who hit you?” And they said many other insulting things to him.**

During this deliberation Jesus was taken out to the courtyard. The guards began to try to humiliate him. Then they just began beating Him. Peter, who was nearby in the courtyard saw this part of Christ’s suffering although afterward he fled. Peter was able to testify about the Lord’s demeanor in this years later in his epistle:

1 Peter 2:23 “When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats.”

The guards had heard Jesus’ testimony that He was the Christ (Messiah). Their demand that He prophesy was probably a sarcastic reference to the test of the true Messiah given in Deuteronomy 18 which we saw earlier.

From Isaiah, who spoke prophetically of this day more than 700 years before, we get further details what they did to Jesus. They also plucked out pieces of His beard from His cheeks.

Isaiah 50:6 “I (*the Messiah*) offered my back to those who beat me,¹⁸ my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.”

One of the great signs of shame for an adult Jewish man was to have his beard cut off. In Jesus’ case they showed their contempt by cruelly pulling out hunks of it.

Peter’s Third Denial

While this beating was going on very close to Peter, he made his third denial, this time, not out of loyalty but out of abject fear.

Luke 22:59 **About an hour later another asserted, “Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.”**

Matthew 26:73 **After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away.”¹⁹**

¹⁸ This also prophesied the later scourging Jesus would receive from the Romans.

¹⁹ These accusers may have been the servants of the elders and High Priests who accompanied the Temple guard to the garden to arrest Jesus.

Mark 14:70b-72 After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.”

John 18:26 One of the High Priest’s servants,²⁰ a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, “Didn’t I see you with him in the olive grove?”

This time, while Jesus was being mercilessly beaten nearby, Peter was accused by a crowd. Some of them had undoubtedly heard the previous accusations and had been thinking about it. At least one had concluded that he was a Galilean by his accent. They knew that Jesus and His disciples were from Galilee. Another servant, who had been to the Garden with the arresting party and figured that he had reason to want blood, thought he recognized Peter as the one who had cut off the ear of his relative Malchus.

Luke 22:60 Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed.

Matthew 26:74 Then he began to call down curses on himself²¹ and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!” Immediately a rooster crowed.

Mark 14:71-72a He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about.” ~~Immediately~~ *And*²² the rooster crowed the second time.

John 18:27 Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

In his mind’s eye, Peter must have seen a short line between the suffering of Jesus before him and a like fate for himself if he acknowledged any connection to Jesus. His pledge of a few hours before was ignored: Matthew 26:35b “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.”

Luke 22:61-62 The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

At that very moment the Lord, covered with spittle, with parts of His beard torn out, and bruised and bleeding, looked the fearful Peter in the eye. The look should have spoken to Peter. He should have understood that it said, “I know you, I knew your weaknesses and your failures

²⁰ This demonstrates that there was more than one servant in the arresting party.

²¹ Calling down curses on himself evidently meant saying something like: “May God damn me if I am lying!”

²² There is no “immediately” in the *Textus Receptus*. The faulty Alexandrian text of the *Codex Sinaiticus* includes the word εὐθὺς which means “immediately” but it isn’t in the reliable *Textus Receptus*.

beforehand, but you still have a destiny in me.” The Lord speaks to each of us the same message when we fail.

Matthew 26:75 **Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.**

Mark 14:72b **Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times.” And he broke down and wept.**

For once the pride and self-confidence of Peter was shattered. It was a lesson he needed, that we all need it we are going to serve the LORD.

The fourth part of the trial before the Sanhedrin - the sentence and remanding to Pilate.

After a short time, the time from cock crow to daybreak, the council came back with the sentence of death that they had predetermined days before. We know from Luke 23:51 that at least Joseph of Arimathea didn't consent to their action. Almost certainly, neither did Nicodemus (John 7:50).

Matthew 27:1 **Early in the morning, all the ~~chief priests~~ *High Priests* and the elders of the people came to the decision to put Jesus to death.**

Mark 15:1a **Very early in the morning, the ~~chief priests~~ *High Priests*, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision.**

Not long after that, the Sanhedrin finished their deliberations and sentenced Jesus to death. Their next problem was how to get the Romans to kill Jesus for them.

Remanding to Pilate

Now, the only thing that was left was to persuade Pilate to crucify Jesus so they could blame him for Jesus' death.

John 18:28 **Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover.**

Matthew 27:2 **They bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor.**

Mark 15:1b **They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.**

Luke 23:1 **Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate.**

Pilate would have met them at the Judgment Seat just outside the Antonia Fortress ²³ which contained the Roman garrison of Jerusalem (see map on next page).

²³ *Named after the famous Roman Triumvir, Mark Antony.*

