



Carl Bloch, *Gethsemane*, 1873, oil on copper, 104 x 83 cm, Museum of National History, Frederiksborg. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

LUKE 22; JOHN 18

JESUS'S LAST NIGHT: GETHSEMANE, ARREST, TRIALS & PETER'S DENIALS

LYNNE HILTON WILSON

Introduction

After the Last Supper, all four Gospels describe Jesus and eleven disciples going to a familiar garden or orchard on the Mount of Olives. Two Gospels record that the garden was called Gethsemane, or “place of the olive press” (Mt 14:32; Mt 26:36). The Synoptic Gospels describe the Lord suffering and praying there, though John does not.¹ The garden additionally becomes the setting for Judas’s betrayal and Jesus’s arrest. Also included in these chapters is the record of Simon Peter learning that enduring Satan’s temptations is harder than he expected.

Jesus departs to the Mount of Olives—Mt 26:30; Mk 14:26; Lk 22:39

Mt 26:30 (Mk 14:26; Lk 22:39). “*and when they had sung an hymn, they went out.*” At the close of the Lord’s Last Supper, the Synoptic Gospels describe the group singing psalms, or hymns. This singing may have been part of their Passover celebration (modern Passover celebrations include singing Ps 115–118).

Table 1. Overview of Jesus's last night

Events	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Gethsemane	26:36–46	14:32–42	22:39–46	18:1
Jesus betrayed and arrested	26:47–56	14:43–52	22:47–53	18:2–12
First Jewish trial: examination by Annas				18:13–14, 19–24
Peter's location and first denial of Jesus in John	26:58	14:54	22:54b–55	18:15–18
Jesus taken to the house of Caiaphas the high priest	26:57	14:53	22:54a	18:24
Jewish trial before the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas	26:59–66	14:55–64	22:66–71	
Jesus mocked	26:67–68	14:65	22:63–65	
Peter denies the Lord	26:69–75	14:66–72	22:56–62	18:25–27
Jesus's first civic trial before Pilate	27:11–14	15:1–11	23:1–6	18:28–30

Jesus calls for personal protection—Lk 22:36–38

Lk 22:36 (NIV). “*if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.*” In the past when Jesus sent His disciples out on missions without money, an extra bag, coats, or shoes, they lacked nothing. But, now knowing of what lay before Him, Jesus called for more personal preparation. Jesus asked about swords, perhaps for self-protection in the future or perhaps just for that night to use while guarding Jesus in Gethsemane because He needed to pray undisturbed. In either case, this discussion triggered Peter to use his sword that night.

Lk 22:38. “*It is enough.*” This may mean “two swords are enough for now” or “this is enough talk about swords.”

Gethsemane²

Jesus suffers in Gethsemane—Mt 26:36–46; Mk 14:32–42; Lk 22:39–46; Jn 18:1

Jn 18:1 (BLB). “*Jesus went out with His disciples beyond the winter stream of Kidron, where there was a garden.*” The garden contained an orchard of olive trees and an olive press. During the rainy season, runoff formed a stream and small valley at the base of Mount Moriah and the Mount of Olives, making it an ideal spot for trees and plants to grow what with the extra water. Following the Intercessory Prayer, John describes Jesus crossing the Kidron into this garden on the Mount of Olives.

This garden appears to have many ties to the Garden of Eden.³ Here, Jesus as the Son of God returned to the issues raised in the first garden. He would submit to the will of God the Father and vicariously suffer as Savior of the world. By suffering for all the sins of Adam and Eve and their descendants, this “last Adam” would “crush [Satan’s] head” to destroy the effects of death and make repentance possible in order that He and all humanity may partake of the fruit of the tree of life *without* sin and return to the presence of God (1 Cor 15:45; Gen 3:15).

Jn 18:2. “Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.” John identifies Judas as the betrayer three times in Jn 12:2, 11, 21. Luke and John record that Jesus often went to this familiar place (Lk 22:39; Jn 18:1). John’s Gospel has Jesus in the same place as the Synoptic Gospels but does not describe the Lord suffering there.

With crowds from across the Roman Empire descending upon Jerusalem, the city did not have room inside its walls for all the pilgrims. The Jewish historian Josephus claims the population of Jerusalem swelled to one hundred times the normal population for the Passover feast, totaling “not fewer in number than three millions.”⁴ Even if Josephus’s numbers are exaggerated, the city still would have been packed. To accommodate the large crowds while maintaining the provision that Jews stay in Jerusalem for the feast, Rabbis hypothetically extended the city walls during Passover to anywhere within a Sabbath day’s journey (which was just over the Mount of Olives). This meant that pilgrims often slept out under the stars.

Mt 26:36 (ESV; also Mk 14:32). “Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane.” We assume the olive orchard had an olive press since the name Gethsemane means “oil press” (*gath*, “press,” and *shemen*, “oil”).

Making olive oil. To squeeze oil out of the fruit, olives were pulverized under large stones and then further crushed under heavy beams and stone weights. Olives were pressed three times, and each pressing produced a different quality of oil that was used for different purposes. The first time, olives were squeezed without water, and before the second and third times they were soaked to help wring out every drop of liquid possible.

1. The oil from the first crushing squeezed out the most precious oil, which was sent to the temple for the most sacred anointings.
2. The oil from the second pressing was used medicinally on one’s body and for food.
3. The third pressing produced the oil burned for light and fire.

In this context, it is significant that *Messiah* (Hebrew) and *Christ* (Greek) mean “anointed one.” Jesus’s crushing experience in Gethsemane provides an atonement that enables us to use “oil” from all three pressings in our lives. First, He provided the anointing for temple priestesses and priests to receive eternal life. Second, His Atonement heals us physically and spiritually. Third, He provides baptism by fire to cleanse us from sin as well as the Holy Spirit to give us light and a witness of truth.

Table 2: Comparison of Gethsemane accounts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke (emphasis added throughout)

Mt 26:36–41	Mk 14:32–38	Lk 22:40–45
<p>Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, <i>Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder</i>. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and <i>very heavy</i>. Then saith he unto them, <i>My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me</i>.</p> <p>And he went a little further, and <i>fell</i> on his face, and prayed, saying, <i>O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt</i>. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them <i>asleep</i>, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? <i>Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak</i>.</p>	<p>And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, <i>Sit ye here, while I shall pray</i>. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be <i>very heavy</i>; And saith unto them, <i>My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch</i>.</p> <p>And he went forward a little, and <i>fell</i> on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, <i>Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt</i>. And he cometh, and findeth them <i>sleeping</i>, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? <i>Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak</i>.</p>	<p>And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.</p> <p>And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, <i>Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done</i>. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them <i>sleeping</i> for sorrow.</p>

Jesus's suffering in the Synoptic Gospels. When we compare the three accounts of the Lord's suffering in Gethsemane, it is clear that Matthew and Mark emphasize the physical nature of both the Apostles and Jesus, as seen in the table above. Fatigue overpowered the disciples, even when Jesus repeatedly asked for their help. Jesus, in His mortal state, was overpowered by pain, and He could hardly bear the suffering and disappointment. So He pled for help but did not receive any.

In contrast, Luke hardly mentions the Apostles' mortal limitations. Luke honors the Apostles by mentioning that they fell asleep because of sorrow and that they disappoint the Lord only once. Luke also softens

the Savior's suffering by including the Father answering His prayer for help by sending an angel with power to comfort, strengthen, and triumph over more than a mortal could bear. Luke is the only Gospel that mentions that Jesus's sweat was as blood (Lk 22:44).

In the Synoptic Gospels' descriptions of the Lord's suffering in Gethsemane, each author emphasizes their own theological focus. Early Christian writers claimed that the Apostles Matthew and Peter (with Mark acting as Peter's scribe) had a hand in organizing the source material for the first two Gospels as eyewitnesses.⁵ The author of John also claims to be an eyewitness, but he chooses not to mention Jesus's suffering.

Luke on the other hand, was not there. He was a Greek convert to Christianity years after Jesus's death and Resurrection and comes from a culture in which physical suffering is not associated with God. Luke portrays Jesus and the Apostles being blessed with God's empowerment. For example, Luke records Jesus kneeling to pray, but Matthew and Mark describe Him falling to the ground and on His face in pain, respectively. (We will find similar differences in the way these three describe Jesus on the cross.)

Jesus's suffering in modern revelation. We find a second witness in the Book of Mormon of Christ's suffering: "He shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people" (Mosi 3:7). The Lord sent a third witness of His suffering to Martin Harris through the Prophet Joseph Smith, now recorded in D&C 19:16–20.

I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; but if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.

This is the only firsthand account of Jesus's suffering in scripture.

Mk 14:32 (JST). **"and the disciples began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy, and to complain in their hearts, wondering if this be the Messiah. And Jesus knowing their hearts said . . . Sit ye here."** This additional insight from the JST of Mark sheds light on why the Apostles were separated into two groups. Jesus needed those with the most faith to support Him during His darkest hour. Unfortunately, even those three disappointed Him: "Sleepest thou? Coudest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray" (Mk 14:37–38).

Mt 26:38 (Mk 14:34; Lk 22:41). **"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch."** Even though Jesus knew what lay ahead, when the time came to experience the excruciating suffering required to atone for the sins of the world, it was harder than He expected. Nevertheless, He endured the misery to atone for the sins of the world and submitted to His Father's will.

Mk 14:36. **"Abba."** This was the word for "father, dad" in Aramaic. We assume that Jesus's mother tongue was Aramaic, as it was for most of the Jews in Palestine. We find at least eight examples of Aramaic

phrases in the New Testament.⁶ Even though Greek was the formal language of the Greco-Roman Empire, Aramaic was adopted at the time of the Babylonian captivity.⁷

Betrayal and arrest—Mt 26:47–56; Mk 14:43–52; Lk 22:47–53; Jn 18:2–12

Mt 26:47 (Mk 14:43; Lk 22:47; Jn 18:3). “*Judas . . . came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves.*” The four Gospels describe Judas arriving in Gethsemane in the middle of the night leading a band of armed men carrying torches. The men included chief priests, scribes, elders, and Pharisees.

Jn 18:4. “*Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?*” Unlike the Synoptic Gospels’ records, John’s account has the Lord approaching the crowd, not waiting for Judas to betray Him. Jesus, not the mob, is in control of the situation.

Lk 22:48 (Mt 26:49; Mk 14:45). “*Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?*” Even after Judas’s blatant hypocrisy, Jesus continues to treat him with kindness and greets him by calling him “friend.” (The JST of Matthew changes “friend” to “Judas.”)

Jn 18:10 (Mt 26:51; Mk 14:47; Lk 22:50). “*Peter having a sword . . . smote the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear.*” According to Luke’s account, Jesus had instructed the group to carry a sword as they left the upper room, so it seems natural that Peter would use his. The account sounds as if the noise of the mob awakened Peter, and he acted instinctively without observing Jesus’s directions. In the dark of the night, he cut off only an ear lobe. All four Gospels share the story, but only John includes both men’s names, Peter and Malchus. That his name was known suggests that Malchus became a Christian. Even at this time of danger and confusion, Jesus taught a message of peace: “All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Mt 26:52).

Jn 18:11. “*the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*” In John’s Gospel, Jesus explains to Peter that He does not need to be physically defended now because it is time to submit to His Father’s will. The enormous mob may think they are intimidating Jesus, but John shows that God is supervising the events.

Mt 26:56 (Mk 14:50; Jn 18:8). “*Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.*” Matthew and Mark describe the Apostles running away in all the chaos and confusion of the moment. John remembers that Jesus told His captors to “let these go their way” (Jn 18:8), portraying Jesus’s protective care of His Apostles. Luke, on the other hand, does not condemn anyone involved by not including the story.

Mk 14:51–52. “*there followed him a certain young man . . . men laid hold on him . . . and [he] fled from them naked.*” Tradition has labeled the author of Mark as this “young man” who followed the groups with only a linen drape about him and then let it go to free himself from the grasp of his captors. John Mark, the author of the Gospel of Mark, would have been a young disciple living in Jerusalem with his mother, Mary (see Act 12:12), making the account plausible. The linen cloth was a sign of wealth, and the home that he and his mother lived in was big enough to house large groups of disciples (see, for example, Act 13:5, 13).

Jewish Trials

Soldiers bind Jesus and take Him to Annas—Jn 18:13–14, 19–24

The four Gospels share Jesus’s arrest and the fact that He was taken to the high priest’s palace:

- Mt 26:57–58: The crowd took Jesus to Caiaphas, the high priest.
- Mk 14:53: The crowd took Jesus to the high priest.
- Lk 22:54: The crowd took Jesus to the house of the high priest.
- Jn 18:24: Annas sent Him bound unto Caiaphas, the high priest.

Only John’s Gospel begins with an extra trial with Annas before the interrogation by Caiaphas.

- Jn 18:13. The crowd took Jesus to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest.

Jn 18:12–13. “the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, and led him away to Annas first.” Annas was high priest of the temple in Jerusalem from AD 6 to 15. According to Num 35:25, high priests served for life (as do modern prophets). But at this time, Jewish religious figures were politically appointed, and Roman rulers moved them around as puppets. It may have been that ultraorthodox Jews refused to recognize the Roman deposition of high priests and still considered Annas the legitimate high priest.⁸

Annas and six of his sons (or sons-in-law) were all Sadducees and eventually became high priests between AD 6 and 63.⁹ History remembers the whole family as greedy, wealthy, and powerful. Lk 3:2 refers to Annas as the high priest, even though his service ended over a decade earlier. John uses the title of high priest as a title of courtesy (as we do with past bishops).

This was the first of three nighttime interrogations or Jewish trials described in the Gospels, but it was illegal to hold a trial at night. These trials have been thoroughly studied and were illegal on many fronts.¹⁰

Jn 18:14. “Now Caiaphas . . . gave counsel . . . that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.” The Romans appointed Caiaphas as the high priest in AD 18, and he held that position until AD 36—overlapping with the Lord’s ministry. Previously, John recorded that Caiaphas had said, “One man should die for the people” (Jn 11:50).

Peter’s first denial—Jn 18:15–18

Jn 18:15. “Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest.” All four Gospels state that Peter somehow got into the courtyard of the high priest’s palace thanks to another disciple at the door who knew him (Jn 18:16). We do not know who the Gospel of John refers to as the nameless, other disciple. That disciple probably was someone in a high position if they had access to the high priest’s palace. Jewish leaders kept high security there, especially at night. “Another disciple” may be someone of the rank of Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea, who were both members of the Sanhedrin (Jn 19:38–39).

Most textual evidence communicates that “another disciple” is not John the Apostle. It is doubtful that John, a poor Galilean fisherman, had this connection. In his Gospel, John later identifies himself as the “other disciple” and “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (Jn 20:9; 21:20), but that is not necessarily the same person as “another disciple.” Perhaps John the Beloved had an influential relative or close friend in Jerusalem, but the text does not say. We do know that Mary’s relative Elisabeth was a descendant of Aaron (Lk 1:5). This opens the doorway for Mary to have Aaronic lineage too. Some suggest the woman identified as Mary’s sister at the cross and tomb is Salome, John’s mother (see my commentary on Jn 19). This could mean that Salome’s children may have had Aaronic relatives too, but most Aaronic Priesthood holders lived closer to the temple to facilitate their service there. Even if Mary’s sons and nephews had an Aaronic lineage connection, that does not mean that a distant relation would have been well known by the politically appointed, wealthy high priest. In any case, it is hard to imagine that a poor fisherman from Galilee would be closely connected with a Jerusalem politician.

Jesus is taken to the high priest’s palace—Mt 26:57; Mk 14:53; Lk 22: 54; Jn 18:24

Mt 26:57 (Mk 14:53; Lk 22:54; Jn 18:15). “led him away to Caiaphas the high priest.” By this time, the position of high priest was no longer passed down from father to son nor given to a righteous representative of Moses’s brother, Aaron (compare Lev 16:32; Num 20:28). According to Num 35:25, high priests served for life. But as mentioned above, at the time of the New Testament, they were politically appointed.

Synoptic trials before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin—Mt 26:59–66; Mk 14:55–64; Lk 22:66–71

Mt 26:59 (Lk 22:66). “all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death.”

The New Testament refers to the council, which in Greek is *synedrion*, that is, Sanhedrin. In Jerusalem, the Great Sanhedrin was the highest judicial court and Jewish legislative body and was led by the high priest, who was Caiaphas at the time. The council gathered here probably did not include the full seventy-one members or even a smaller portion of twenty-three members of the same council. It may have been a group gathered of “elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes” that formed “their council” (Lk 22:66). As it was forbidden for the Great Jerusalem Sanhedrin to meet at night, it may have been another council formed strictly for the purpose of killing Jesus, or else it was illegal (see Jn 11:47). Usually, the members of the Great Sanhedrin sat in a semi-circle in the Chamber of Hewn Stones, which was a colonnade on the temple courtyard.¹¹

Mt 26:61. “This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.” The author, Matthew, emphasizes that even though witnesses were sought, they found none until two false witnesses spoke (Mt 26:60). Significantly, the evidence they brought forward would prove that Jesus was a prophet and the Son of God in four days hence.

Mt 26:63 (Mk 14:61). “But Jesus held his peace.” Only in two Gospels, Matthew and Mark, does the Lord remain silent before the council and Caiaphas initially.¹² Luke records that Jesus was silent before Herod (Lk 23:9). The Synoptics again record Jesus not answering Pilate at first.¹³ Only John records the Lord’s conversations at each trial.

Mt 26:63–65 (Mk 14:61; Lk 22:70). “I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said. . . . blasphemy.” Jesus’s answer to Caiaphas triggered an immediate charge of blasphemy—which was punishable by death. According to the Mishnah, a “blasphemer is not liable to the death penalty, unless the victim has pronounced the Ineffable Name [YHWH].”¹⁴ Blaspheming or cursing God without pronouncing the “Ineffable Name” was punishable by flogging only. When Jesus prophesied of His return in glory, it was interpreted as blasphemy.

Jesus is mocked—Mt 26:67–68; Mk 14:65; Lk 22:63–65

Mt 26:67–68 (Mk 14:65; Lk 22:63–64). “they spit . . . buffeted . . . smote . . . Prophecy . . . Who is he that smote thee?” After having just suffered for the sins of the world in Gethsemane, Jesus’s level of physical, spiritual, and emotional exhaustion was unfathomable; yet, He did not retaliate.

Peter’s other denials—Mt 26:69–75; Mk 14:66–72; Lk 22:56–62; Jn 18:25–27

John’s text jumps between the Lord’s trials and Peter’s denials, while the Synoptics place the denials together.

Mt 26:69 (Mk 14:67; Lk 22:56; Jn 18:17). “a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.” The scene returns to Peter, who is standing in the courtyard with the servants and officers around the little fire outside the high priest’s palace. Each of the Gospels uses the same Greek root, *paidiské*, to describe a servant girl as the first person who confronts Peter. The next two accusations are remembered differently in the Gospels:

- Matthew and Mark record that the first two were by women and the last by a man.
- Luke has the first coming from a woman and the last two from men.
- John’s first comes from a female servant; his second comes from the plural “they” (probably the servants and officers mentioned in Jn 18:18); and his third comes from another servant.

Jn 18:26. “One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?” The third person to question Peter was the most fearsome for Peter, being a relative of Malchus, the officer that Peter struck in Gethsemane (Jn 18:10).

Mt 26:74 (Mk 14:71). “began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man.” Characteristically, Luke’s and John’s texts avoid the details of Peter’s further weakness.

Table 3. Texts of Peter's denials in harmony (Kurt Aland's Translation)

Mt 26:69–75	Mk 14:66–72	Lk 22:54–62	Jn 18:25–27
Now Peter was sitting outside	And as Peter was below		Now Simon Peter was standing
in the courtyard. And a maid	in the courtyard, one of the maids	then a maid,	
came up to him,	of the high priest came;		
	and seeing Peter	seeing him	
and said, "You	warming himself,	as he sat in the light and	and warming himself.
also were with Jesus the Galilean."	she looked at him, and said, "You	gazing at him, said, "This man	They said to him, "Are you not
But he denied it before	also were with the Nazarene, Jesus."	also was with him."	also one of his disciples?"
them all, saying, "I do not know	But he denied it,	But he denied it,	He denied it
what you mean." And	saying, "I neither know nor	saying, "Woman, I do not know	and said, "I am not."
When he went out to the porch,	understand what you mean." And	him." And	
another maid saw him,	he went out into the gateway.		One of the servants of the
and she said to the bystanders,	And the maid saw him, and	a little later someone else saw him	high priests, a kinsman of the man whose ear Peter had cut off,
"This man was with Jesus of Nazareth."	began again to say to the bystanders,	and said,	asked,
And again he denied it	"This man is one of them."	"You also are one of them."	"Did I not see you in the garden with him?"
with an oath, "I do not know the man."	But again he denied it.	But Peter said,	Peter again denied it;
After a little while	"Man, I am not."	"Man, I am not."	
the bystanders came up and said	And after a little while again	And after an interval of about an hour	
to Peter, "Certainly you are also	the bystanders said	still another insisted, saying,	
	to Peter, "Certainly you are	Certainly this man also	

Table 3. (continued)

Mt 26:69–75	Mk 14:66–72	Lk 22:54–62	Jn 18:25–27
one of them, for your accent	one of them; for you are a	was with him; for he is a	
betrays you.” Then he began to	Galilean.” But he began to	Galilean.”	
invoke a curse on himself and to swear,	invoke a curse on himself and to swear,	But Peter said,	
“I do not know the man.”	“I do not know this man of whom you speak.”	“Man, I do not know what you are saying.”	
And immediately	And immediately	And immediately, while he was still speaking,	and at once
the cock crowed.	the cock crowed	the cock crowed.	the cock crowed.
	a second time.	And the Lord turned	
And Peter	And Peter	and looked at Peter. And Peter	
remembered the saying of Jesus,	remembered how Jesus had said to him,	remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him,	
“Before	“Before	“Before	
the cock crows,	the cock crows twice,	the cock crows today,	
you will deny me three times.”	you will deny me three times.”	you will deny me three times.”	
And he went out and wept bitterly.	And he broke down and wept.	And he went out and wept bitterly.	

Lk 22:61 (Mt 26:75). “the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord.” In modern Jerusalem, a church dedicated to this event records the following warning: “Likewise Jesus turns to look upon each of us when we sin in hope, we can likewise repent.”

Mt 26:74 (Mk 14:72; Lk 22:60; Jn 18:27). “immediately the cock crew.” A noisy rooster may have indicated the fulfillment of Jesus’s prophecy. Yet the Mishnah claims that it was illegal to raise fowl in Jerusalem.¹⁵ “Cock crow” was also the name of the trumpet signal that was blown at 3:00 a.m. to close the third watch of the night, so this may have been what signaled the prophecy’s fulfillment.¹⁶

Lk 22:62 (Mt 26:75; Mk 14:72). “And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.” Peter’s terrible remorse speaks to his deep sorrow when he finally realized what he had done. But his recommitment to

the Lord and changed nature speak to his repentant heart. In this account, Peter represents all disciples, who are still under Satan's temptations and can fall short. No one but Jesus was or is infallible.

President Spencer W. Kimball spoke with compassion about this event:

Peter was under fire; all the hosts of hell were against him. . . . If Satan could destroy Simon now, what a victory he could score. Here was the greatest of all living men. Lucifer wanted to confuse him, frustrate his prestige, and destroy him. However, this was not to be, for he was chosen and ordained to a high purpose in heaven, as was Abraham.¹⁷

This does not mean the Lord told Peter to deny Him. That idea was spread by those who equate apostleship with infallibility, and it minimizes the power of Jesus's Atonement to save us. It also speaks against the doctrine of agency. We believe that all humans—especially those called of God—are tempted and thus need to watch themselves and to repent.

Jesus's trial before Caiaphas—Jn 18:19–24

Jn 18:19. *“The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.”* In the second trial in John, Jesus is asked questions by the currently reigning high priest, Caiaphas (Jn 18:24). It appears that this occurred before 6:00 a.m., so this trial, too, was illegal. Caiaphas tries to find Jesus guilty of being a false prophet and asks Jesus about two things: His disciples and His doctrine. According to the law of Moses, these two things could provide evidence of a false prophet (Deu 13:1–6; 18:20).

Jn 18:21. *“Why askest thou me?”* Jesus knows the law and cuts the dialogue short by pointing out that Jewish courts require witnesses. Why are they not following legal protocol? Jesus did nothing in secret, but Caiaphas is unprepared, making this aspect of the trial illegal. This was embarrassing to Caiaphas, and his servants became defensive (and abusive).

Jn 18:22. *“one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus.”* The law stipulated, “Thou shalt not . . . curse the ruler of thy people” (Ex 22:28). Ironically, this law was used against Jesus as retaliation for His disrespect. (Josephus recorded the need to behave in a timid fashion and to speak meekly before the high priest and judges.¹⁸) Even more ironic is the fact that according to the Synoptic Gospels, the Sanhedrin spit at, slapped, and challenged the Son of God.¹⁹

Jn 18:23. *“If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil.”* Jesus knew He was innocent and pointed it out to His accusers. The interrogation was short because Jesus appealed for a formal hearing with witnesses before the Sanhedrin. Again, note how John describes the Lord acting with majestic control. John doesn't mention details from Jesus's trial before the council or Sanhedrin, but the Synoptic authors do in Mt 26:57, 59–68; Mk 14:53, 55–65; Lk 22:66–71.

Table 4. Events of Jesus's coming trials

Events	Mt	Mk	Lk	Jn
<i>Third stage of Jewish Trial</i>				
Jesus formally condemned by the Sanhedrin and led to Pilate	27:1, 2	15:1	22:66–23:1	18:28
Judas's remorse and suicide	27:3–10			
<i>First Stage of the Roman Trial</i>				
Jesus before Pilate for the first time	27:11–14	15:2–5	23:2–5	18:28–38
<i>Second Stage of the Roman Trial</i>				
Jesus before Herod Antipas			23:6–12	
<i>Third Stage of the Roman Trial</i>				
Pilate reluctantly sentences Jesus to crucifixion	27:15–30	15:6–19	23:13–25	18:39–19:16

First Stage of the Roman Civil Trial

Jesus's trials before the Roman governor Pilate—Jn 18:28–40

All four Gospels discuss Jesus's trials before the Roman governor Pilate. This week we will look at the account in John's Gospel, and next week we will continue with those in the Synoptic Gospels. Many events overlap, as seen in the chart below.

Jesus's trial before Pilate—Mt 27:11–14; Mk 15:1–11; Lk 23:1–6; Jn 18:28–40

Jn 18:28. "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early."

Other Greek manuscripts include "at daybreak," suggesting that the Jewish trial with Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin occurred between 3:00 a.m. and about 6:00 a.m. The three stages of the civil trial—including Jesus's scourging and sentencing—lasted all morning, from dawn until noon. The Jewish leaders took Jesus from the high priest's palace to the Roman palace. In the Roman praetorian, Pilate's official hall of judgment was probably in Herod's newer palace on the western hill of Jerusalem's new city or else was in the older Antonian Fortress on the northwest corner of the temple's Court of the Gentiles on Mount Moriah.²⁰

Jn 18:28 (BSB). "the Jews did not enter the Praetorium, to avoid being defiled and unable to eat the Passover." Ironically, the Jews wouldn't go into the Roman procurator's judgment hall because contact with the Gentile Pilate would make them ceremonially unclean for their Passover ritual that night. Tragically, they sought to murder the Lamb of God, which was a far filthier act.

Jn 18:29. "Pilate . . . said, What accusation bring ye against this man?" As these Jews would not go in, Pilate went outside to negotiate with them and learn about Jesus's infraction. Pilate rarely interacted

Pilate. Pontius Pilate was the fifth Roman procurator over Judea. He was appointed by Sejanus, an anti-Jewish advisor to Tiberius Caesar, and he served his emperor in Judea from AD 26 to 36. He came from a lower noble lineage and despised the nonconforming religious Jews. The Jews likewise detested Pilate's stern rule and lack of religious sensibilities. Two Jewish contemporaries, Josephus and Philo, indicated that Pilate murdered, robbed, and acted barbarically.

Near the beginning of his rule, Pilate sent a detachment of troops to Jerusalem carrying Roman flags or ensigns (images of the emperor and small eagles) to intimidate the people. The Jews saw this as an attack against their second commandment and called it blasphemy. Mass demonstrations erupted, until finally Pilate removed the offending symbols. Later Pilate built an aqueduct bringing water from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. Josephus records that Pilate paid for the project with funds from the temple treasury.²¹ Making matters worse, Pilate then suppressed the Jewish rioters with bloodshed.

Though the story may not be accurate, the Gospel of Luke records that Pilate mingled the blood of slain Galileans "with their sacrifices," and Jesus used the story to teach a principle (Lk 13:1–2 BLB). At the time of the Lord's death, Pilate was most likely in on the plot in Gethsemane because he would have authorized the Roman soldiers to arrest Jesus.

The Christian historian Eusebius (AD 263–339) claimed that Pilate died of suicide. His wife is recognized as a saint in the Greek Orthodox Church for protesting Jesus's death.²²

with the Jews. Their relationship was strained in part over the issue of ritual purity. This occasion was an unusual situation since the Jews rarely asked Pilate for a favor. Pilate negotiated a place of cooperation.

Jn 18:31. *"It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."* Judea became a Roman province in AD 6. Since that time, Rome probably held power to pronounce the death sentence (and yet the Jews still stoned Stephen in Act 7:59).²³ The Jewish council or Sanhedrin tried most religious cases, but very serious political cases "were reserved for the Roman Governors."²⁴

Jn 18:33. *"Pilate . . . said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?"* All four Gospels describe Pilate's private conversation with Jesus. Again, Jesus does not answer and rather asks Pilate a different question: "Is that your own idea" (Jn 18:34 NIV). Pilate appears to have interpreted it as, "Are you converted?" since he becomes defensive and expresses his contempt for Jews.

Jn 18:36. *"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight."* Jesus does not answer Pilate's second question but discusses the first question, about His kingdom. Jesus's subjects include numberless angels who could defend Him, but He will not fight or reign in Jerusalem yet.

Jn 18:37. *"To this end was I born."* John's Gospel shows Jesus in complete control of the conversation and expands the question to hint at His premortal call. Jesus's conversation is thought provoking. To what end were we, His disciples, born?

Jn 18:38. “What is truth?” Jesus did not give Pilate a response to this question either, but He answered it in modern times: “Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24). Look at the different interpretations of Pilate’s response here. Even with his tense relationship with the Jews, Pilate now pokes fun at them by calling this bound prisoner their king (Mk 15:9). This puts the Jews right where Pilate wants them—in a place to confess that they have no king but Caesar (Jn 19:15).

Jn 18:38. “I find in him no fault at all.” Pilate declares that Jesus is innocent, but he cares not for justice but rather for politics. To foster Jewish submission to Roman authority, Pilate betrayed Jesus as well. The Jewish trial was “a mockery of a prophet, and the Roman trial a mockery of a king.”²⁵

Jn 18:39–40. “But ye have a custom, that I should release . . . Not this man, but Barabbas . . . a robber.” We see another ironic interplay here: the Jews wanted to release a man who had done what they tried to falsely accuse Jesus of doing. First, Caiaphas was furious that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, but the name Barabbas means “son of Father.” Secondly, Barabbas was a leader of a band hoping to overthrow the government. Barabbas thus represented everything that the Jews and Romans condemned Jesus of—blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God and being a revolutionary or brigand (a kind of terrorist) attempting to overthrow Roman rule (see Lk 23:19). This is an allegorical fulfillment of the scapegoat in the Day of Atonement ritual (Lev 16). The law of Moses was “a shadow of those things which are to come” in the promised Messiah (Mosi 16:14). This is most notably seen in Jesus’s Passion and death. The law was given in part so that the Israelites would recognize Him. The prophet Isaiah testified of the Messiah’s suffering. Jesus fulfilled all of Isaiah’s Suffering Servant passages (Isa 49:15–16; 50:6–7; 52:13–53:12).

Suffering Servant passages fulfilled during Jesus’s last night.

I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. (Isa 50:6–7)

His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. . . . [He] hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. . . . He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. (Isa 52:14; 53:2–5, 7–8)

Notes

1 Mt 26:36–46; Mk 14:32–42; Lk 22:39–46.

2 In the last hundred years, biblical scholars have tended to interpret Jesus’s suffering in Gethsemane not as an atonement for the sins of the world but rather as fear at facing His own death the following day. What happened in the garden was clarified when the Lord revealed the only firsthand account of His suffering in scripture, D&C 19:18.

3 Paul refers to Jesus as the second Adam because he was the second man created by God (1 Cor 15:45). Jesus’s genealogy in Luke traces Joseph’s lineage back to Adam, “the son of God” (Lk 3:38).

4 Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, 2.280.

5 David W. Bercot, ed., *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 422–433. Early Christian fathers and historians, including Papias (ca. 120), Irenaeus (ca. 180), Clement of Alexandria (ca. 195), and Eusebius (ca. 315), mention that Mark acted as Peter’s scribe to compile the Gospel known as Mark. However, modern critical biblical scholars doubt this claim as well as the authorship of Matthew and John. David Noel Freedman and Allen C. Myers, eds., *Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 859–861.

6 We find lingering Aramaic remnants in the Gospels:

- *Talitha cum*, “Little girl, get up!” (Mk 5:41)
- *Ephphatha*, “Be opened” (Mk 7:34)
- *Abba*, “Father” (Mk 14:36)
- *Raca*, “fool” (Mt 5:22)
- *Rabbouni*, “teacher” (Jn 20:16)
- *Eli Eli lema sabachthani*, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mt 27:46)
- *Hosanna*, “O Lord, save us” (Mk 11:9)
- *Maranatha*, “Lord, come!” (1 Cor 16:22)

7 The Aramaic language remained the Jewish tongue from the sixth century BC to the fifth century AD. The Old Testament books of Daniel and Ezra were written in Aramaic, as was the Talmud. *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Aramaic language,” <https://britannica.com/topic/Aramaic-language>.

8 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 813.

9 Annas (also spelled Ananus and Ananias), son of Seth (AD 6–15), had six sons by birth or marriage who followed him as the one reigning high priest during the time of the New Testament: Eleazar ben Ananus (AD 16–17), Josephus son of Caiaphas (AD 18–36), Jonathan ben Ananus (AD 36–37 and 44), Theophilus ben Ananus (AD 37–41), Matthias ben Ananus (AD 43), and Ananus ben Ananus (AD 63). Tradition claims that this last son had James the brother of Jesus stoned in AD 62.

10 John W. Welch, “The Legal Cause of Action Against Jesus in John 18:29–30,” in *Celebrating Easter: The 2006 BYU Easter Conference*, ed. Thomas A. Wayment and Keith J. Wilson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2006), 157–175.

11 *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “sanhedrin,” <https://britannica.com/topic/sanhedrin>. “Politically, it could appoint the king and the high priest, declare war, and expand the territory of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Judicially, it could try a high priest, a false prophet, a rebellious elder, or an errant tribe. Religiously, it supervised certain rituals, including the Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) liturgy. The Great Sanhedrin also supervised the smaller, local sanhedrins and was the court of last resort.”

12 Mt 26:63; 27:12; Mk 14:61.

13 Mt 27:14; Mk 15:2, 5; Lk 23:3.

14 Shaye J. D. Cohen, Robert Goldenberg, and Hayim Lapin, eds., *The Oxford Annotated Mishnah* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2022), 528.

15 Mishnah, *Bava Kamma* 7:7. “Hens are not raised in Jerusalem because of the (flesh of the) offerings [which are eaten there. Hens peck in the refuse and they might bring up a bone the size of a barley-corn from a sheretz (a creeping thing) and render the flesh unclean.] And Cohanim may not [raise hens] in [all of] Eretz Yisrael because of the taharoth (‘pure things’).”

16 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 828.

17 Spencer W. Kimball, “Peter, My Brother” (Brigham Young University devotional, July 13, 1971), speeches .byu.edu.

18 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 14.172.

19 Mt 26:67; Mk 14:65; Lk 22:63–64.

20 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 845.

21 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.60–62.

22 Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, eds., *Studies in Scripture*, vol. 5 of 8, *The Gospels* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 446–447. See Mt 27:19.

23 When Rome conquered an area and added it to their empire, they wrote up the rules that governed the province. We do not currently have the source document for such laws in Judea. But in most provinces, Rome maintained control of the death sentence.

24 Brown, *John XII–XXI*, 848.

25 Richard Holzapfel, “The Passion of Christ,” in *Lord of the Gospels: The 1990 Sperry Symposium of the New Testament*, ed. Brent L. Top and Bruce A. Van Orden (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1990), 79.