

Jesus' betrayal and arrest was known and announced long before the events in the Garden of Gethsemane took place, so the arrest itself was anti-climactic.

All four Gospels record the trial of Jesus. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus was first taken to Annas, the former High Priest, who still enjoyed dignity and power in the Jewish world (Jn. 18:13). Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the acting High Priest who filled that position from 18 AD to 36AD. Caiaphas was the one who first said clearly that it was a political necessity to murder Jesus (Jn. 11:49-50; 18:14). Peter denied Jesus at the house of Annas (Carson, Gospel of John, 582).

### The trial of Jesus was as follows:

Early Friday morning (Nisan 15) while it was still dark

- First Jewish phase before Annas – Jn. 18:13-24 (This was more of an inquiry than a trial – no judgments were made)
- Second Jewish phase before the Sanhedrin – Matt. 26:57-68; Mk. 14:53-65; **Lk. 22:54**
- Peter's denials – Matt. 26:69-75; Mk. 14:66-72; **Lk. 22:55-65**; Jn. 18:25-27

Friday morning (Nisan 15) after the sun rose

- Third Jewish phase was a formal decision before the Sanhedrin – Matt. 27:1; Mk. 15:1a; **Lk. 22:66-71**
- Remorse and suicide of Judas – Matt. 27:3-10; Acts 1:18-19
- First Roman phase before Pilate – Matt. 27:2, 11-14; Mk. 15:1b-5; **Lk. 23:1-5**; Jn. 18:28-38
- Second Roman phase before Herod Antipas – **Lk. 23:6-12**
- Third Roman phase before Pilate – Matt. 27:15-26; Mk. 15:6-15; **Lk. 23:13-25**; Jn. 18:39-19:16

The background of the story in Luke 22:54-62 is found in Luke 22:31-34. In 22:31 it states that Satan was given permission to shake Peter's faith to the core although it would not be destroyed. Peter, however, responded with an untested confidence. Mark 14:31 says, "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." Peter, like many of us, overestimated his own strength and ability to defeat Satan. He thought he knew himself better than the Lord knew him. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall;" Proverbs 16:18 also warns, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Jesus prophesied that the rooster would not crow that day until Peter had denied Him three times (Lk. 22:34).

Peter's weaknesses became immediately apparent when they reached Gethsemane. Jesus told the disciples in Matthew 26:40-41, "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Peter fell asleep instead of praying; he boasted too much and prayed too little.

Thank God that Luke 22 is not the end of the story. In John 10:27 Jesus had said, "My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and *no one shall snatch them out of my hand.*" Peter's faith crumbled at Jesus' trial, but it did not die for Jesus' prayer had sustained him (Lk. 22:32). Some 30 years later Peter wrote in 1 Peter 5:8,9: "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Resist him *firm in your faith.*"

**22:54 Having arrested Him, they led Him away and brought Him to the house of the high priest; but Peter was following at a distance.**

**22:55 After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them.**

**22:56 And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, "This man was with Him too."**

**22:57 But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him."**

Luke 22:54 says that Peter followed at a distance. What is meant by this must be determined by where the emphasis lies. If "at a distance" is the emphasis, then Peter's apprehension in following is highlighted. However, if the emphasis is on "followed" then there is a sense in which Peter should be commended, for all the other disciples had vanished. The former is probably more likely since the rest of the paragraph focuses on Peter's fear, not his bravery.

Although we cannot definitively pinpoint the location of the High Priest's house, the Church of Saint Peter in Gallicantu has been built on one of the possible sites. The area was excavated and a series of cisterns and grottos were unearthed that may have been used for confining prisoners for a short period of time. If this is the location, it is a little more than 1000 yards south-west of the traditional site of Gethsemane and is therefore a reasonable location. However, Josephus said that the house of Annas was in the upper part of the city of Jerusalem near the palace of King Agrippa, about 100 yards west of the south end of the temple mount. If this is the correct site, then the house of the chief priest would be about 550 yards from the Church of Saint Peter in Gallicantu. (Edwards, 653–654).

Spring nights in Jerusalem are cold so a fire was kindled in the courtyard of the High Priest. A courtyard was an open area that was surrounded by the rooms of the house. Peter sat there by the fire, separated from Jesus (v. 61). The word *mesos* (among – Gk. μέσος) in verse 55 emphasizes that Peter was situated squarely among those who had arrested Jesus and the imperfect tense "was sitting" (22:55) indicates that he remained there for some time (Edwards, 654). The feeling of the language is that Peter wanted to remain inconspicuous and blend into the crowd.

All four Gospels agree that a servant girl instigated the first challenge to Peter. John says that she was the doorkeeper (Jn. 18:17). Luke says she was staring (looking intently) at Peter for some time in the light of the fire, and then once she felt sure that she had seen him with Jesus exclaimed, "This man was with Him too."

Peter was unprepared to respond so he did what he could to convince people that he wasn't one of Jesus' followers. Although no charges were made against the disciples, he was among Jesus' enemies and fearful, so he immediately denied the slave girl's accusation. Matthew 26:70 says, "he denied it before them all, saying, 'I do not know what you are talking about.'"

The word "denied" (ἀρνέομαι *arneomai*; 22:57) means "to refuse to recognize" or "to abandon, deny solidarity with" (Marshall, 842). In the aorist tense it indicates decisiveness. His denial was, "I do not know Him." The Greek word for "know" (οἶδα; *oida*) is not the word one would have expected to hear. It refers to the knowledge of facts as opposed to knowing something or someone through experience

(γινώσκω; *ginosko*). Peter is not simply denying firsthand knowledge of being with Jesus; he is denying having any knowledge of Jesus at all. "The phrase is like the Jewish ban formulas used against those dismissed from the synagogue: 'we no longer know you, 'that is, we have nothing to do with you.' As such Peter's denial is a strong one" (Bock, 1783–1784), and yet this was what Jesus had exactly predicted (Lk. 22:34 –know = οἶδα; *oida*). Matthew and Mark note that Peter moved from the porch; the pressure was beginning to affect him. Luke just says that some time passed before the next question came.

**22:58 A little later, another saw him and said, "You are one of them too!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not!"**

**22:59 After about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too."**

**22:60 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed.**

**22:61 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."**

**22:62 And he went out and wept bitterly.**

Peter's answer to the servant girl did not stop the chain of questions that followed. Mark 14:69 says, "The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, 'This is one of them!'" But Luke 22:58 makes it clear that others joined in the questioning as well, for in Greek, the person asking the question in verse 58 is masculine in gender. In other words, Luke records the comments of a man who interjected, "You are one of them too!" That is, "You ARE one of the disciples of Jesus!" Peter denied it emphatically, "I am not!" Matthew 26:72 says, "again he denied it with an oath, 'I do not know the man.'" The NT gives a unified picture of what is a true disciple of Jesus; discipleship always implies the attachment of one person to another. It was assumed that the Master's belief shaped the disciple's belief and conduct. "Peter may wish to be disassociated from Jesus, but in the eyes of the world his existence is defined in relation to Jesus" (Edwards, 654). Peter disacknowledged his discipleship relationship to Christ. He was not Jesus' follower; Jesus was not his Master; he did not submit to Christ, imitate His conduct, or believe what Jesus believed.

Another hour passed and a third individual approached, insisting that Peter was with Jesus (22:59). This was the most serious of the three accusations. According to Jewish law the testimony of two or three witnesses established a fact (Deut. 19:15). The third witness is the most definitive: "*certainly* this man also was with Him." "Certainly" translates the Greek ἐπ' ἀληθείας (*ep' aletheias*), meaning "truly" or "truthfully"; paraphrased it means something like "*surely* he was with Him!" In judicial contexts it is "the actual state of affairs to be maintained against different statements" (Bultmann, TDNT, I, 238). Peter's accuser even gives a reason for his certainty: "*for* he is a Galilean too." Peter's accent had given him away (Matt. 26:73). Why would a Galilean be there unless he was in some way connected to Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee? John says that the third accuser was a relative of the slave whose ear Peter had sliced off earlier in the Garden (Jn.18:26). Peter once again denied having any knowledge of Jesus at all (οἶδα; *oida*; 22:60). Matthew 26:74 (Mk. 14:71-72) states, "Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know the man!'"

France comments on Matthew 26:74:

The verb "swear" [ὀμνύω *omnuo*] alone would have indicated merely another oath as in [Matthew 26] v. 72, but it is preceded by *katathematizo* ["curse"], a verb which occurs only here but is generally agreed to be synonymous with the verb used in the Marcan parallel, *anathematizo*, "to curse, anathematize" (and in the LXX "to devote," especially to destruction). *Anathematizo* elsewhere is always a transitive verb requiring a direct object to denote the person cursed; cf. Paul's use of *anathema* as a curse formula in 1 Corinthians 12:3; 16:22; Galatians 1:8,9, in each case applied to a person other than the speaker. If the verb here meant, as some versions have suggested, that Peter is putting *himself* under a curse if he is lying, it would require "himself" as object, as it has in Acts 21:12, 14, 21.<sup>1</sup> Here, where the object is not expressed, it means that Peter is cursing someone other than himself, and the most natural sense in this context would be that he now began to curse *Jesus*, as a way of disassociating himself from Him; this was precisely what Pliny later required those accused of being Christians to do, in order to prove their innocence. Matthew and Mark, by leaving the object unexpressed, refrain from stating in so many words that Peter cursed Jesus, but it is hard to see what else the choice of these transitive verbs could be meant to convey. (France, NICNT, Matthew, 1034).<sup>1</sup>

If France is correct Peter was saying, "Let Jesus be damned!" – let Him be cut off from God and given over to destruction, let Him be accursed. His words are utterly blasphemous!

Matthew also says that Peter began to swear (ὀμνύω *omnuo*); this does not mean that he was shouting profanities but that he was making an oath affirming that what he is saying is true (Stein, ECNT, Mark, 692). To paraphrase, "I swear by oath that I am telling the truth! I do not know (οἶδα; *oida*) the man."

However, before he could complete his sentence ("while he was still speaking" – Lk. 22:60) a rooster crowed. It was then that the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Peter was immediately aware that Jesus' words, "before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times" (22:34, 61), had come true.

This was Peter's greatest moment of failure; it was the failure of his confessed love for Christ. "The effect on Peter was shattering; he went out and wept bitterly" (Morris, 345).

**22:63 Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him, 22:64 and they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, "Prophecy, who is the one who hit You?"**

**22:65 And they were saying many other things against Him, blaspheming.**

According to Matthew and Mark the beating in verses 63-65 happened prior to Peter's third denial. Luke has it after. Harmonizing the differences in the gospels is no small task since each writer wrote in an abbreviated format with a theological purpose in mind.<sup>2</sup> What is clear is that Jesus was mistreated and abused while in custody.

With Peter's story finished, Luke focuses solely on Jesus and he begins with His mistreatment. The primary word to describe Jesus' mistreatment is mockery, a word which means literally, "to dance

around someone,” with the derivative meaning, “to mock, scorn, or ridicule” (Edwards, 656). The other Gospel accounts record that the guards spit in Jesus’ face, struck Him with their fists, and slapped Him (Mk. 14:65; Matt. 26:67). Luke summarizes this abuse with the words, “they beat him” (ESV; v. 63).

The guards’ behavior - blindfolding Jesus, striking Him and demanding that He prophesy who hit Him - was their sadistic way to pass time. “Jesus, we are left to assume, did not rise to the bait, but the reader is left with the irony that the Messiah whose ‘prophetic’ abilities they are mocking has in fact predicted the very rejection and condemnation that He is now undergoing. The spitting in the face and the blows recall Isaiah’s prophecy of the physical abuse of God’s Servant (Isa. 50:6) . . .” (France, NICNT, Matthew, 1030).

**22:66** *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,*

**22:67** *"If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe;*

**22:68** *and if I ask a question, you will not answer.*

**22:69** *"But from now on THE SON OF MAN WILL BE SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND of the power OF GOD."*

**22:70** *And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am."*

**22:71** *Then they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."*

The sun was rising on Friday morning (which was still Nisan 15 according to the Jewish calendar- see my notes on Luke 22:7–22:22) so a formal trial could commence. Mark records two hearings by the Sanhedrin, one at night (Mk. 14:55–64) and a second at daybreak (Mk. 15:1). The trial recorded in Luke 22:66-71 follows the trial in Matthew 26:57-68 and Mark 14:53-65 (see the chronology in the introduction; Bock, 1796).

The Sanhedrin (Council of elders) consisted of 71 men (70 plus the High Priest) and was the highest Jewish tribunal. “The Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was formed (Mt. 26:3,17,59; Mk. 14:53; 15:1; Lk. 22:66; Acts 4:5 f; 5:21; 22:30) of high priests (i.e. the acting high priest, those who had been high priests, and members of the privileged families from which the high priests were taken), elders (tribal and family heads of the people and priesthood), and scribes (i.e. legal assessors), Pharisees and Sadducees alike (compare Acts 4:1 ff; 5:17,34; 23:6) . . .” (ISBE; Sanhedrin).

According to the Mishnah (a digest of all the oral laws supposedly communicated by Moses to the seventy elders, as well as traditions and explanations of Scripture, written around 200), the Sanhedrin met in the Hall of Hewn Stones in the temple; if this is where Jesus’ trial took place, it presupposes that He had been transferred from the High Priest’s house. The Mishnah stated that 23 members of the Sanhedrin needed to be present to judge capital cases. A verdict of “not guilty” required only a majority of one. In such cases the trial was complete. When someone was declared guilty of a capital offense, there had to be a second hearing the following day, and in order to sustain the verdict, it was required that there was a majority of at least two. Both trials needed to take place during the daytime, and neither could take place on the eve of a Sabbath or festival. In the case of blasphemy someone had to be

accused of cursing God's name itself. In such cases the punishment was stoning; the corpse would then be hung from a tree (Edwards, 658; ISBE; Jesus' Arrest and Trial). However, in Jesus' day the Sanhedrin was not empowered to carry out capital punishment at all; such cases "required the confirmation of the Roman procurator. . . The only case of capital punishment in connection with the Sanhedrin in the New Testament is that of our Lord. The stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:54 ff) was probably the illegal act of an enraged multitude" (ISBE; Sanhedrin).

If the same legal procedure was followed at the time of Jesus' trial, then His trial was clearly illegal. The trial took place on the day before the Sabbath, so there was no second hearing. Most importantly, Jesus had not blasphemed God – He had committed no capital offense. However, practically speaking, it didn't matter much if the trial was legal or illegal since the Sanhedrin had already decided the outcome of the trial before it began – they had pre-decided that Jesus was guilty of crimes deserving death (Lk. 19:47; 22:2). The trial (ironically, an illegal trial) was held to give the appearance of keeping the law.

The way that Luke presents the trial differs from Matthew and Mark. He makes no mention of false witnesses (Mk. 14:56–60; Matt. 26:59 -62), nor does he even mention a formal death sentence (Mk. 14:64; Matt. 26:66). His focus is exclusively on Christology; the Sanhedrin asks only one thing, "Are You the Christ?" (22:67) "Are You the Son of God?" (22:70).

Jesus responds to their question by saying, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer." Jesus' point is that it is useless to answer. If He did answer, they wouldn't believe Him. If He asked them a question, they wouldn't respond (see Mk. 3:4; Lk. 14:4; 20:26). There was no use discussing Jesus' identity. When the Son of Man is seated at the right hand of the power of God then they will get the answer to their question about Jesus' identity.

Although Jesus did not reply directly, His combination of two powerful images in the Old Testament – the return of the Son of Man in glory (Dan. 7:13), and the royal Messiah sitting at God's right hand (Psa. 110:1) – leave no doubt that He was claiming to be the Messiah.

#### NOTE 1: Peter's Cursing of Jesus in Matthew 26:74

In France's commentary on the parallel passage in Mark, he explains, "In the only other NT uses of the verb in Acts 23:12, 14, 21, the reflexive sense is achieved by adding *ἑαυτοῦς* [himself]; without that addition its meaning is to curse someone or something other than oneself" (France, NICNT, Mark, 622). To state it simply, the Greek word *ἀναθεματίζω* (*anathematizo*) can mean, "to declare anathema, devote to destruction" or to be "bound...under...oath or curse." That is, it can mean, "If I am lying let me be cursed." However, it only has this second meaning when the subject and the object of the verb are stated as being the same person. Note the following (and only) examples of this. In each case the object of the curse is clearly the same person as the subject of the verb. Therefore, it is translated as "bound under oath."

- Acts 23:12 - “. . . the Jews [subject] . . . bound [verb] themselves [object] under an oath. . .”
- Acts 23:14 - “. . . We [subject] have bound [verb] ourselves [object] under a solemn oath. . .”
- Acts 23:21 - “. . . more than forty [subject] of them. . . have bound [verb] themselves [object] under a curse. . .”

When the reflexive pronoun (himself, herself, itself, yourself, themselves, ourselves, yourselves, etc.) is not used, someone else is being cursed. This is the case with Matthew 26:74. There is no object in the original text. It simply reads, “he began to curse.” So we ask, “who did Peter begin to curse?” The obvious answer is “Jesus,” not “himself.”

#### NOTE 2: Differences in the Gospel Accounts of Peter’s Denial

It should also be noted that there are slightly different details in the Gospels. For example, Matthew and Mark say that Peter moved from the fire to the courtyard and the gateway when people started asking him questions (Matt. 26:71; Mk. 14:68). Luke makes it sound like he never left the fire. This can be explained by the fact that Luke had a more forensic purpose in his writing. According to the law, two or three witnesses were necessary to establish a fact (Deut. 19:15). By shrinking the story down to the testimony of a woman and two men and wiping away the “clutter,” Luke’s “editorial hand satisfies the Jewish criterion of credibility by supplying three witnesses” (Edwards, 655); it became obvious to everyone that Peter was lying.

Furthermore, there are different details as to who was asking the questions. It is probable that a number of people were interacting each time Peter was questioned, so the Gospel writers had the latitude to choose from among them who they wanted to write about depending on the point they were trying to make.