

# A Study of the Christ Text

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
The second prediction of Peter's denial	26:30-35	14:26-31	22:39-40	18:1
Jesus prays in the Garden	26:36-46	14:32-42	22:40-46	
The mob comes and arrests Jesus	26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-54	18:2-12
First Jewish phase of trial				18:13-24
Second Jewish phase of trial	26:57-68	14:53-65	22:54	
Peter's denials	26:69-75	14:66-72	22:55-65	18:25-27
Third Jewish phase of trial	27:1	15:1	22:66-71	
Remorse and suicide of Judas	27:3-10			(Acts 1:18-19)

## Overriding Principles

- The weakness of the flesh affected Jesus, but not in the way it did His followers; Jesus never betrayed the Father's cause.
- The mystery of Jesus' humanity and divinity come into conflict and the flesh is subdued.
- Truth and commitment can stand in quiet resolve against a riotous mob and in stark contrast to all the unprincipled actions of men.
- Selfish ambitions can drive men to abandon all the rules they profess to live by.
- Remorse and repentance are not to be confused (cf. II Cor. 7:8-10).

## Commentary

### The Second Prediction of Peter's Denial (Matt. 26:30-35; Mk. 14:26-31; Lk. 22:39-40; Jn. 18:1)

- The book of Zechariah pictures a shepherd who is pierced (Zech. 12:10), rejected (Zech. 11), and, in Zechariah 13:7, a shepherd the equal of Jehovah who, when struck, causes the scattering of His followers.
- Jesus reminds Peter that his predicted denial will take place.
- The reference to a rooster crowing would be understood to mean that the betrayal would happen before the coming dawn.

### Jesus Prays in the Garden (Matt. 26:36-46; Mk. 14:32-42; Lk. 22:40-46)

- The word *Gethsemane* comes from a Hebrew word that means "oil press," indicating a place on the Mt. of Olives where olive oil was produced.
- The most likely site for this account would have been a cave where the disciples may have gone to sleep.

- Jesus may have chosen the location because it offered warmth on what was a cold evening.
- The usual posture for a Jew in prayer was to stand and lift up one's hands; Jesus chose a posture associated with passionate entreaty and an admission of helplessness (cf. Mk. 5:22; 7:25).
- Intimacy allows very direct speech in prayer.
- The Father's will can be trusted as right, even when all emotions point in another direction.
- "Abba, Father" introduces an interesting thought.
  - "Abba" is the Aramaic word for father; there is no record of its use being employed toward God in a personal reference at the time of Christ.
    - The term is not the equivalent of "daddy," as some have suggested.
    - It would, however, carry a more familiar quality than our English word "father would" yet it would still contain a measure of respect and submission.
  - "Father" is from the Greek "pater," and would be somewhat interpretive for non-Jewish readers.
    - Familiarity and respect are blended together.
    - Both are part of a relationship with God.

**The Mob Comes and Arrests Jesus (Matt. 26:47-56; Mk. 14:43-52; Lk. 22:47-54; Jn. 18:2-12)**

- The mob was most likely made up of heavily armed Roman soldiers assigned to by Pilate to secure the temple, perhaps about 600 in number, and Levitical temple guards carrying clubs.
- The temple guard of the Jews had a well earned reputation of being little more than thugs.
- Judas' calling Jesus "Rabbi," followed by a kiss, would have normally been a customary gesture of respect from a disciple who regarded himself as a close friend; here, it is high-handed hypocrisy (cf. II Sam. 20:9)!
- Peter tried to defend Jesus against overwhelming odds.
- Peter had courage to engage in sword play, but not to affirm the teachings and identity of Jesus with his words (cf. Matt. 10:32-34) Jesus will have none of Peter's tactics; as Jesus had previously made clear, He was to die.
- The 72,000 angles Jesus references could have destroyed Rome multiple times over (cf. I Kg. 6:17).
- Jesus wanted to know why he was being arrested as a common robber, or perhaps as a revolutionary.

- The young man who fled naked into the night cannot be identified with any person in particular; his flight, however, symbolizes the complete breakdown among Jesus' followers.
- The "Chief priests" would represent the aristocrats of the priestly family.
- Jesus' courageous demeanor and disconcerting reputation produced a laughable scene when the mob began falling all over itself.

### **The First Jewish Phase of the Trial (Jn. 18:13-24)**

- Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas, was technically the high priest, but his father-in-law was the true power behind this highest of Jewish offices (cf. Num. 35:25).
- The family of Annas was extremely wealthy and greedy.
- Annas had five sons who served as High Priest, as well as his son-in-law; he was much like a godfather in Jewish politics.
  - The household of Annas was widely considered to be dishonorable.
  - Eventually the zealots took their wealth in the Jewish revolt that led to the destruction of Jerusalem.
- Apparently, either the apostle John was known to the high priest or perhaps he was a relative of the priestly family.
- John's position allowed him to move closer to the initial trials of Jesus.
- The palatial compound of the family of Annas is the location for the first trials.
- Spring nights in Jerusalem were commonly cold.
- A trial held at night was regarded to be illegal.
- The accused was not to be questioned in a Jewish trial.
- Josephus considered the Sadducees, dominated by priests, to be the most heart-less of all judges.
- The Jews were most concerned about the theology of Jesus, even though they would later express political concerns to the Romans.
- Jesus had not kept His teachings secret, they were given in the most public of places, almost everyone would have contacted them (cf. Isa. 45:19; 48:16).
- Many religions prefer hidden things, not so with Jesus.
- Witnesses in support of a defendant were to be questioned first at a Jewish trial.
- Jesus' requesting His legal rights brought Him a sharp (Gk. *Rhaspisma*) blow to the face.
- The High Priest was unbiblically given a place of respect by his cohorts that put him above the law of God.

- The accusation was that Jesus broke the law of Exodus 22:28; He did not.
- Jesus' being bound at trial was against the law.

**Second Jewish Phase of the Trial—the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:57-68; Mk. 14:53-65; Lk. 22:54)**

- The home of Caiaphas would have been expansive, well able to house the proceedings; it would have been part of a very large complex that housed the family of Annas.
- At least twenty-three members of the group of seventy, plus the High Priest, would have been necessary to make up a quorum of the Sanhedrin in a capital crime.
- Sadducees dominated the numbers of the group with a somewhat token representation of Pharisees comprised of their scribes, or "teachers of the law."
- Self-incrimination was illegal and unbinding.
- Finding Jesus guilty of claiming to be the expected Messiah would allow the Jews to present Jesus to Rome as a threat to Caesar.
- Jesus associates Himself with the divine Son of Man portrayed in the Messianic vision of Daniel 7:13-14 as well as the divine figure at the right hand of God in Ps. 110:1-2.
- The next time the Sanhedrin would encounter Jesus would be in His coming in judgment on them as the everlasting Messiah king.
- The reaction of Caiaphas was a show of deepest emotion, forbidden in a Jewish court except as a ritual act at the conclusion of a properly conducted trial that brought a guilty verdict.
- Blasphemy was punishable by death (cf. Lev. 24:11).
- Jesus' claim of divinity sealed the deal as far as the Jews were concerned—death was necessary.
- The Jews, however, were not allowed by the Romans to execute convicted felons—Rome would be needed to complete the deed.
- A variety of illegal features stand out at Jesus' trials.
  - Trial at night.
  - On the eve of a Sabbath or on a festival day.
  - Negative testimony first.
  - A guilty verdict on the day of the trial.
  - Conflicting witnesses.
  - Trial at a private home.
  - Emotion shown by a judge during a trial.
- As with the first phase of the Jewish trial, Jesus is again beaten and otherwise treated with indignity.

### **Peter's Denials (Matt. 26:69-75; Mk. 14: 66-72; Lk. 22:55-65; Jn. 18:25-27)**

- Matthew compacts all of Peter's denials into one passage, typical of his topical form of development.
- While Jesus is on trial, so, in a sense, is Peter.
- Galileans were considered as grossly inferior by the Judeans (cf. Jn. 7:45-52).
- The speech of Galileans often slurred words and brought them ridicule from the more precise spoken Judeans.
- Ironically, a relative of Malchus, the man whose ear Peter cut off, remembers Peter in the garden.
- Peter's final denial could have come at a variety of disputed times, but certainly before dawn.
- The trumpet signal at the close of the third night watch (midnight to 3:00 A. M.) was called "cockcrow." But a literal rooster fits other information better.
- Later, Peter would be asked to affirm Jesus three times (Jn. 21:15-19).

### **Third Jewish Phase of the Trial (Matt. 27:1; Mk. 15:1; Lk. 22:66-71)**

- The early dawn begins this more "official" part of the Jewish trials.
- It is debated whether the term "Son of God" was commonly used as a Messianic term in the time of Christ.
- Jesus, based on His past experiences, expresses that it really didn't matter what He said, they will not listen to His answers or respond to His questions.
- Jesus repeats His association with divinity.
- They are now ready to take Jesus to Pilate so Rome can authorize an execution.

### **Remorse and Suicide of Judas (Matt. 27:3-10; Acts 1:18-19)**

- Judas would most likely not have been able to approach closely to the inner sanctuary; he probably had to hurl the coins at the priests from a distance.
- Judas is the only example of suicide in the New Testament.
- The Rabbi's believed suicide was a rebellion against God, the giver of life.
- The Jews were quite comfortable to pay a man to betray Jesus for execution, but were too "scrupulous" to take the money back "as blood money."
- The Acts account gives more information; Judas hanged himself in the very field his betrayal money was used to buy, later falling from the rope and bursting open on the ground.

- Matthew weaves together elements from Zechariah 11:12-13 and Jeremiah 19:1-13.
  - The context of Jeremiah has to do with innocent blood being shed and a burial ground being created.
  - Zechariah deals with the rejection of Jehovah's good shepherd and his being grossly undervalued at thirty pieces of silver.
  - The thematic parallels are stunning; Jehovah's shepherd is rejected by the people of Israel and valued at thirty pieces of silver. Additionally, money is flung into the temple and a polluted thing is purchased.

### **Who is Jesus?**

- He remains consistent to His humanity in His personal struggles leading to His death—He did not opt out.
- He gives straight forward counsel to His friends, including the bitter and the sweet.
- He suffered that we might live.
- He tells the truth, no matter what might result.