THE DEATH of the MESSIAH
Jesus Before the Jewish Authorities
Series Outline

- **First Sunday in Lent:** Introduction
- **Second Sunday in Lent:** Jesus prays and is arrested in Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, Across the Kidron
- **Third Sunday in Lent:** Jesus Before the Jewish Authorities
- **Fourth Sunday in Lent:** Jesus before Pilate, the Roman Governor
- **Fifth Sunday in Lent:** Jesus is crucified and dies on Golgotha. He is buried nearby
References

References

A Crucified Christ in Holy Week. Essays on the Four Gospel Passion Narratives
Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Collect, Third Sunday in Lent,
Book of Common Prayer, p. 218
There may have been one or more oral (and possibly written) pre-Gospel Passion narratives.

Mark wrote his Passion Narrative using *only* these pre-Gospel narratives.

Matthew wrote his Passion Narrative:
- Drawing heavily from Mark’s narrative, and
- Weaving additional material from “pre-Matthian” traditions known to him.
Introduction
Formation of the Passion Narratives

Luke wrote his Passion Narrative:
- Also drawing heavily – but more freely – from Mark’s narrative, and
- Weaving additional material from oral “pre-Lukan” traditions known to him.

John wrote his Passion Narrative independently from Mark, Matthew and Luke using “pre-Johannine” traditions known only to him.

He also had access to some of the same “pre-Lucan” traditions Luke used.
Introduction
Passion Narratives as Drama


Introduction
Passion Narratives as Drama

imson:
Passion Narratives as Drama

The second Act of the Passion Narrative describes how Jesus, having been led to the high priest (and other authorities), was tried/interrogated by him/them, and how Jesus' answers caused him to be given over to the Roman governor. Related to Jesus' trial/interrogation was a mockery by Jewish authorities/police, three denials by Peter, and an attempt by Judas to render back to the Jewish authorities the price of innocent blood.


Scene 2: Mockery/Abuse of Jesus; Denials by Peter; Judas (Mark 14:65-15:1; Matt 26:67-27:10; Luke 22:54b-65; 23:1; John 18:15-18,22-23,25-28a)
Introduction
Where Would We Have Stood?

Where would we have stood as part of the Passion narratives?

- With the disciples who fled from danger, abandoning Jesus?
- With Peter, denying Jesus?
- With Judas, betraying Jesus?
- With the Pilate of John, trying to avoid a decision between good and evil?
- With the Pilate of Matthew, washing our hands of a bad decision so to appear blameless?
- With the religious leaders (many sincerely religious) who condemned Jesus?
Introduction
Different Facets of Jesus

Each of the Gospel writers had a distinctive outlook on the Passion. Each knows a different facet of Jesus:

- The Jesus in Mark and Matthew plumbs the depths of abandonment, only to be vindicated after his death.
- The Jesus in Luke worries about others, gently dispenses forgiveness and heals in the midst of his ordeal.
- The Jesus in John reigns victoriously from the cross in control of all that happens.

No one of these perspectives exhausts the meaning of Jesus. It is as if one walks around a large diamond to look at it from three different angles.
Background: The Roman Government in Judea, about 30 AD
Roman Empire

*Imperium*: “the supreme administrative power, involving:
- command in war, and
- the interpretation and execution of the law (including the death penalty)”

- Oxford Classical Dictionary
Roman Empire
Caesar Augustus

Octavian (Caesar Augustus):
- First Emperor of Rome.
- **27 BC:** Roman Senate gave Octavian title of Augustus, and awarded him *imperium* over several provinces (including Syria and Egypt) for 10 years.
- Subsequently extended another 5 and then 10 years.
- **23 BC:** Roman Senate gave Caesar Augustus veto right over itself, effectively *ending* the Roman Republic.
- **19 BC:** Augustus effectively given *imperium* over all the empire.
- **12 BC:** became “high priest,” head of the Roman State Religion (*pontifex maximus*).
Tiberius Caesar

13 AD: Given *imperium* over the provinces (= chief military commander) 1 year before *Augustus* died.

14 AD: After a show of reluctance, he let the Senate proclaim him the second emperor of Rome after *Augustus* died. He ruled until 37 AD.

Scheming and suspicious:

23 AD: started a reign of terror, accusing many senators and members of his own family of treason, and executing them.
Roman Governance in Palestine

69 BC: Roman general Pompey entered Jerusalem, ending Jewish independence.

47 BC: Jewish Hasmonean high priest Hyrcanus II made ethnarch (local king) by Julius Caesar and given authority over most of Palestine.

37 BC: Herod (the Great) had become king by marrying into and then killing off the Hasmonean family. Later confirmed as an ally king of Rome (rex socius) by Augustus.
Roman Governance in Palestine
Herod the Great

Herod the Great’s reign marked by:
- Splendid building:
  - Monumental restoration of the temple,
  - Rebuilt Samaria (renamed Sebaste = Greek equivalent of Augustus),
  - Built new city of Caesarea (named for Augustus).
- Brutal repression of any sign of opposition.
Roman Governance in Palestine
After the Death of Herod the Great

- **4 BC:** Herod the Great died.
- His sons went to Augustus in Rome to petition for rule of Palestine.
- A delegation of Jews also went to Augustus to petition for the end of rule by the Herod family.

Augustus decided:
- **Herod Archelaus:** ethnarch of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea,
- **Herod Antipas:** ethnarch of Galilee and Perea,
- **Herod Philip:** ethnarch of territories northeast of the Lake of Galilee.
6 AD: at the petition of leading Jews and Samaritans, Augustus: Exiled Herod Archelaus to Gaul, Created New Roman Province of Judea.

Coponius first Roman Governor of the new province of Judea (6 AD to 9 AD).

Pontius Pilate was the fifth Roman Governor of Judea (26 AD to 36 AD).
Jesus’ life and ministry:

- Grew up (Nazareth) and preached in Galilee area, under the rule of Herod Antipas (4 BC - 39 AD)
- Sometimes visited the Decapolis, under the rule of the Roman Province of Syria.
- In going to Bethsaida and Chorazin from Capernaum, moved into the territory of Herod Philip (4 BC – 34 AD).
- Visited Samaria and Jerusalem (in Judea), under rule of the Roman Province of Judea.
- Governor of Judea resided in Caesarea, on the coast.
Syria was an older and more important Province than Judea. Governor of Syria was assigned to people of higher social rank and past achievement. Governor of Syria had four well-trained, highly professional legions of soldiers at his disposition.
Judea was a less important Province:

- **Governor of Judea** was usually assigned to a member of the lower social class.
- **Governor of Judea** had at his disposal five cohorts of soldiers of less professional military quality:
  - One Roman cohort = several hundred soldiers. One Roman legion contained ten cohorts.
- The “Roman” soldiers in Judea were mostly non-Jewish, local recruits from Samaria.
- The well-trained, highly professional Roman legions from Syria were brought in only for rebellions and invasions.
Roman Governance in Palestine
Province of Judea

 Governor of Judea:

Titles of the governor:

“Prefect” (Greek eparchos, Latin praefectus) = administrator of province, supervised auxiliary troops.

“Procurator” (Greek epitropos, Latin procurator) = protector of financial rights of emperor to tax money.

Imperium of Prefect / Procurator of Judea included a full coercitio (= the right to coerce or punish) for the protection of Roman interests, including the power to execute.
Background:
The Jewish Sanhedrin about 30 AD
When **Judea** was under Persian and Greek control, Jewish priests, elders and nobles (heads of the leading families) had leadership and judicial roles.

During the era of Greek control (3rd and 4th centuries BC) there was a Jewish senate of elders called the **Gerousia** or **Synedrion** (= Greek for **Sanhedrin**).
End of the 2nd century BC: Maccabees / Hasmoneans restored the hereditary high priesthood (their own families) and made themselves kings.

“The elders of the Jews,” the Sanhedrin / Gerousia, still remained a potent force.

63 BC: Roman general Pompey conquered Jerusalem

The “kingship” aspect of the hereditary high priesthood was terminated; but Rome left to the high priesthood the role of “the primacy / leadership of the nation.”
Sanhedrin
History Prior to Time of Jesus

The Herod family of kings had to work through the body of the Sanhedrin / Gerousia.

The Sadducees, having a strong base in the priests and elders, dominated the Sanhedrin / Gerousia.
Sanhedrin
Near the Time of Jesus’ Death

After formation of Roman **Province of Judea** in 6 AD: the **Sanhedrin** retained its administrative and judicial powers.

Membership of the **Sanhedrin** included:

- **Leader:** “**High Priest**,” appointed by the Roman Governor,
- **“Chief priests:”** probably:
  - former high priests, and
  - prominent members of the families from which high priests were drawn,
- **“Elders:”** wealthy or distinguished families,
- **“Scribes:”** those with excellence in intelligence and learning.
Sanhedrin
Near the Time of Jesus’ Death

Membership probably not assigned; rather the attendance of representatives of particular groups was expected when a Sanhedrin was “called.”

The location where the Sanhedrin met is uncertain.
Most likely: some place adjacent to, rather than in, the Temple.
Sanhedrin
Near the Time of Jesus’ Death

Sanhedrin was dominated by Sadducees:
- Priestly caste,
- Followed only the written law of Moses (written Torah),
- Denied resurrection after death.

Some of the “scribes” may have been Pharisees:
- Believed in oral tradition (oral Torah),
- Believed in resurrection after death.
Sanhedrin
Near the Time of Jesus’ Death

15 AD: Governor Valerius Gratus (4th Governor of the Province of Judea) removed Annas as High Priest.

Annas, former High Priest, remained on the Sanhedrin as a “Chief Priest.”

Gratus then appointed 4 different High Priests between 15-18 AD, the last of which was Caiaphus (son-in-law of Annas).

Caiaphus was able to remain High Priest through remaining 8 years of Gratus’ term and the entire 11 years of Pontius Pilate’s term (26-36 AD).
Sanhedrin
Near the Time of Jesus’ Death

 situación de la Sanhedrín y la pena de muerte:

Jews could execute for certain clear religious offenses. For example:
- Violating prohibitions for circulating in certain quarters of the Temple,
- Adultery (perhaps).

Beyond this, the Jews had to hand cases over to the Romans.
- The Romans were sometimes willing to cast a “blind eye” on an “illegal” execution by the Sanhedrin, but was not likely to do so in a case of notoriety.
Jesus Before the Jewish Authorities: Mark’s Passion Narrative
After his arrest at Gethsemane, Jesus immediately brought to a formal trial before Sanhedrin. Peter follows into the courtyard of the High Priest.

Trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin:
- Begins with false witnesses whose testimony does not agree.
- A false witness claims Jesus said “I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.”
- Mark never makes clear what part of this testimony is false.

Mark
Mark

The **High Priest** of the **Sanhedrin** is annoyed by the ineptitude of the witnesses and the silence of Jesus.

Jesus’ silence is foretold in Isaiah’s picture of the Suffering Servant of the Lord (Isaiah 53:7) “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.” (NRSV).

Oswalt Kreusel - Jesus before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin - 1591
To force an answer, the **High Priest** demands: “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” (Mark 14:61; NRSV).

Mark has already told us Jesus is God’s Son:
- At Jesus’ Baptism (1:11),
- At the Transfiguration (9:7).

Peter has previously proclaimed Jesus the Messiah (8:29).

Jesus answers affirmatively. °
Jesus goes on to say he is the **Son of Man**. In Jewish apocrypha, the “Son of Man:”

- Was a Messianic human figure,
- Had a heavenly preexistent origin,
- Was glorified by God,
- Was an instrument of divine judgment.

Jesus warns the **High Priest** that he will see him:
“seated at the right hand of the Power,” “coming with the clouds of heaven.”
Mark

The **High Priest** declares this is blasphemy, demands all the **Sanhedrin** members condemn Jesus to death.

No one speaks to Jesus’ defense.

Members of **Sanhedrin** then abuse Jesus, striking him, spitting on him, taunting him to prophesize:

Picture of the Suffering Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 50:6: “I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting” (NRSV).
Two theological themes brought out in trial:
Jesus would both destroy the temple and “rebuild” it (as the Church).
Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God.
Meanwhile, Peter in the courtyard of the High Priest is also being questioned:

- First denial: Peter pretends to the maidservant that he does not understand her question.
- Second denial: Peter directly denies he is a disciple.
- Third denial: Peter swears an oath that he does not know Jesus and curses as he speaks.

Many scholars believe Mark meant that Peter was cursing Jesus.

Many Christian readers of Mark would face martyrdom rather than deny or curse Jesus.
Mark

Peter then remembers Jesus’ prophesy about himself and is moved to weep.

Story of Peter here offers hope to later Christians who fail and deny their faith, only to later repent.

Note the irony:

at the very moment Jesus is being mocked by the Sanhedrin to prophesy,

Jesus’ prophesy about Peter is coming true.
Jesus Before the Jewish Authorities: Matthew’s Passion Narrative
Matthew’s account of Jesus’ trial before the **Sanhedrin** very similar to Mark’s.

Matthew does tell us the **High Priest** of the **Sanhedrin** is Caiaphas.

Many false witnesses speak against Jesus. Two finally claim Jesus said: “I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days” (NRSV).
Caiaphas the High Priest demands Jesus to answer if he is “the Messiah, the Son of God”? Jesus answers “You have said so,” (rather than “I am” as in Mark).

Jesus goes on to warn the High Priest he “will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven” (NRSV).

Caiaphas declares blasphemy; demands condemnation and sentence to death.
Matthew

Jesus is then abused by Sanhedrin: “Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, saying, ‘Prophesy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?’” (NRSV; Matt. 26:67-68).

At same time, Peter in the courtyard of the High Priest, denies Jesus three times, swearing an oath and cursing in the third denial.

As in Mark, we see the irony that Jesus’ prophesy about Peter comes true as he is mocked by the Sanhedrin to “prophesy to us, you Messiah!”
Matthew gives us a unique report on another disciple who betrays Jesus – Judas (Matt. 27:3-10).

Logically, the story is an awkward insertion, for at the same time:

- the Sanhedrin is leading Jesus to Pilate AND
- the Sanhedrin is in the Temple arguing over the “blood money” Judas throws back at them.

Judas goes out and hangs himself.

David came to Gethsemane to weep after his trusted advisor Ahithophel betrayed him; Ahithophel subsequent hanged himself (2 Samuel 17:23).
Matthew

The **Chief Priests** of the **Sanhedrin** decide to buy a burial field for foreigners with the 30 pieces of silver. Matches prophecies in Jeremiah and Zechariah.

Matthew’s story of **Judas** conflicts with Luke’s story in Acts 1:18-19:

- In Acts, Judas dies from a type of “internal combustion” (as did an anti-God figure Antiochus Epiphanes in 2 Maccabees 9:7-10).
The mystery of the different fates of the two disciples who failed Jesus captured in two laconic sentences by Matthew:

Peter: “And he went out and wept bitterly” (NRSV; Matt 26:75)

Judas: “… and he went and hanged himself” (NRSV; Matt 27:5)
Jesus Before the Jewish Authorities: Luke’s Passion Narrative
Luke

 Luke gives us a quite different picture of the night after Jesus’ arrest compared to Mark and Matthew.

 There is *no formal Sanhedrin* trial.

 Jesus is brought to the *High Priest*’s house after his nighttime arrest at Gethsemane, but apparently is kept in the courtyard until an *informal* questioning by the *Sanhedrin* *in the morning*. °
Peter follows to the same courtyard, and denies Jesus three times:

Jesus is present in the same courtyard the whole time!

*Unique to Luke:* at Peter’s third denial, Jesus (right there in the courtyard with Peter!) looks over at Peter, causing Peter to remember Jesus’ prophesy about him.

Jesus is subsequently abused in the courtyard by “the men holding him.”

In the morning, Jesus is interrogated by the collective leadership of the Sanhedrin, rather than just the High Priest.

He is questioned about his identity as Messiah and Son of God.

The issue of destroying the Temple and building it in 3 days does not come up.

Jesus answers their questions very ambiguously.
Luke

Not a formal trial:
- There are *no* witnesses,
- There is *no* sentence handed down.

Perhaps the interrogation was “preparatory” to the one and only trial that would be conducted by the Roman Governor.
Luke

“the self-composure of Jesus throughout the sequence of Peter’s denials, the mockery, and the questioning is striking. It is not the majestic supremacy of the Johannine Jesus, but the God-given tranquility of one to whom the Father has delivered all things (Luke 10:22) and the human tranquility of one who is totally innocent.”

- Brown, page 51
Jesus Before the Jewish Authorities: John’s Passion Narrative
John also gives us a quite different picture from Mark / Matthew of Jesus before the Jewish authorities.

First he is brought to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who questions Jesus “about his disciples and his teachings.”

Annas was a former High Priest of the Sanhedrin until he was removed by the fourth Roman Governor of Judea; he had then remained on the Sanhedrin as one of the “Chief Priests.” Caiaphas was the current High Priest.

Annas’ questioning suggests he is searching for something that could be used to turn Jesus over to the Romans for a trial.

Jesus is supremely self-confident and easily outpoints Annas.
In the meantime, Peter is denying Jesus three times:

First denial: to woman who brings Peter into the courtyard,

Second denial: to those standing around a fire with Peter, warming themselves,

Third denial: to a relative of the slave of the High Priest whose ear Peter had cut off (only John identifies Peter as cutting off the slave’s ear).

Peter’s denials are interwoven with Annas’ questioning of Jesus, highlighting their simultaneity.
John

Unique to John: “another disciple” has also comes with Peter to the High Priest’s house.

This disciple is presumably the “the disciple whom Jesus loved” = the “Beloved Disciple.”
The “Beloved Disciple” appears in John after Chapter 13 at all crucial scenes when another disciple is also present:

- Last Supper (13:23-26),
- Jesus before Annas (18:15-16),
- Crucifixion (19:26-27),
- Empty Tomb (20:2-10).

In each instance, the “Beloved Disciple” acts almost as a foil to Peter, always coming out better than Peter.
The Synoptic tradition (Mark, Matthew, Luke) was popularly associated with Peter’s apostolic witness.

The “Beloved Disciple” was the patron of John’s Christian Community.

John seems to be defending the unique tradition of his Community and his Gospel by associating it with the apostolic witness of the “Beloved Disciple” – a disciple who always bested Peter when the two were put to the same test.
Next week:

THE DEATH of the MESSIAH

Jesus before Pilate, the Roman Governor