

I. John 18:12-19:16 – The Six Trials of Jesus

A. John 18:12-24 – The first trial: Jesus before Annas, a former high priest

1. John 18:12-14 – Bound like a criminal, Jesus was led to His first trial. This initial **trial** is recorded only here in the Gospel of John.
 - a. John 18:12 – *So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him ...* Jesus was bound as if He were a dangerous criminal and then escorted like a **villain** to Jerusalem. After having invested so much in His capture, you might expect the Romans to maintain jurisdiction over His person, but they did not.
 - b. John 18:13 – *... and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year .* This first trial was convened before **dawn**. Annas, who belonged to the aristocratic party of Sadducees, profited from temple scams. Earlier that very week Jesus had disrupted the corrupt temple syndicate, likely directly affecting Annas.
 - 1) Jesus was taken to Annas’ home first, to be arraigned and interrogated. This man Annas, however, was not the actual high priest at that time but had served as high priest back in AD 6-15. In the same way we call **former** leaders “Mr. President” or “Madam Secretary,” most still called Annas “high priest.” John 18:15-16, 19-22
 - 2) Annas was extremely wealthy and influential within Judaism. He swayed the Sanhedrin, Israel’s supreme **court**. Nothing major concerning Jewish internal, religious or societal affairs could be done without its approval or consent. Soon, right after dawn, they would convene to deal with the “Jesus-problem.”
 - 3) Although in these notes we call this a trial, it was really an **illegal** court, a sort of lynch-mob proceeding. In fact, everything about the trial was illegal. Annas actually had no judicial authority and trials could not be held after sunset or in private.
 - c. John 18:14 – *Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people .* Caiaphas was the actual high priest at that time, yet Jesus was brought to Annas. Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas and he unwittingly **prophesied** that Jesus’ would die in the place of Israel. John 11:50
2. John 18:15 – *Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest... John* , the son of Zebedee and author of this book, was likely this unnamed disciple.
 - a. Although a fisherman by trade, John could easily have had family or business **ties** with Annas. We note that he enjoyed some freedoms the other disciples did not have, like being present at the cross when Jesus was crucified. John 19:35
 - b. We will see that Peter was trying to stay anonymous while still watching from the sidelines. The high priestly family was in **opposition** to Jesus and had never believed in Him or His message. This event was not going to go well for Jesus, nor for Peter.
3. John 18:16 – *... but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in.* Since the unnamed disciple personally **knew** the high priest, he was able to get Peter on site.
 - a. The doorkeeper was a servant girl. So, this was not high security. By her simple question, she would play a role in the undoing of Peter. Remarkably it was not the Sanhedrin or a squadron of soldiers that forced Peter to first deny the Lord. It was a mere **slave** girl.
 - b. It may be that the “*other disciple*” remained anonymous in this passage in order not to seem judgmental. The truth is, any of us can **deny** the Lord, and if we boast otherwise, beware of a nearby rooster.
4. John 18:17 – Then the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, “You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.” Warming himself by the fire, Peter **denied** being Jesus’ disciple, just as Jesus had predicted. What a sharp contrast to His earlier declaration that very night of, “Lord... I will lay down my life for You.” John 13:37
5. John 18:18 – *Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself .* Peter had taken a major **risk** by coming into the place where Jesus was being held.
 - a. It is not surprising that they were building a charcoal fire since during Passover month (Nisan) the nights can get rather chilly in Jerusalem. Peter was standing near the fire with guards who had likely been at the arrest where he had tried to be a hero. Did Peter really believe he could somehow **escape** recognition?

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- b. There are only two places in scripture where a **charcoal** fire is mentioned: here, where Peter denied Jesus; and later in John 21:9, where Jesus restored Peter. Precision in such small details helps us ascertain that John was likely the unnamed disciple who was with Peter that night.
6. John 18:19 – *The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching* . The scene changed away from Peter and back to **Jesus**.
- a. Annas, the de facto high priest, wanted information. He wanted to know more about Jesus followers' and teaching. This line of questioning was not in good faith; Jesus was being vindictively **interrogated**.
- b. After they killed Jesus, they'd probably need to round up and **execute** His followers. Any information they could glean from Jesus by intimidating Him would be helpful in stomping out the rising "Jesus movement."
7. John 18:20 – *Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret."* Ignoring Annas' first question concerning His disciples, Jesus said He had nothing to **hide**. This was in direct contrast to this illegal meeting done under the cover of darkness.
- a. Instead of giving out sensitive information, Jesus turned their questions around. He went on the **offensive** with questions of His own.
- b. Jesus informed the former high priest that what He taught was **public** knowledge. He could ask anyone. Jesus had nothing to hide. He was not guilty.
8. John 18:21 – *"Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said ."* Jesus was not going to go along with their witch-hunt. He asked why they questioned Him. If they wanted to know what He taught, they could ask anyone, because everyone knew. Some spectators thought Jesus was being too **defiant**.
9. John 18:22 – *When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying , "Is that the way You answer the high priest?"* Responding to Jesus' legitimate challenge, an officer illegally **struck** Jesus, an un-convicted person.
- a. Hitting Jesus for His question was extreme. Overreaction is the type of hypocrisy common among zealots who belong to **corrupt** religions.
- b. When Jesus had lawfully challenged the legitimacy of the high priest's question, one of the officers **retaliated** with a harsh physical slap. Jesus turned to the man who had slapped him with a question specific to him.
10. John 18:23 – *Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?"* Instead of reacting negatively, Jesus lawfully and calmly **challenged** the officer's authority to hit Him. Jesus asked the officer to show Him where He had misspoken. 1 Peter 2:22-23
- a. In a legitimate court even the worst of criminals are treated with human **dignity**, but this was obviously not a valid trial. They had already passed judgment on Jesus.
- b. They were hoping to get Jesus to say something that might **incriminate** Him.
11. John 18:24 – *So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.* Faced with total injustice, Jesus remained composed. When Annas saw that he was **outwitted** by Jesus, he quickly dispatched Him to Caiaphas for more interrogation.
- a. This short walk would take Him into His next illegal trial. This would be yet another kangaroo court. At no point was Jesus offered proper **legal** representation, proper defense, or the right to appeal their decisions, present evidence and/or witnesses.
- b. They had **prejudged** His case and would try to execute Him as quickly as possible, without due process. They were seeking for anything to justify execution.

B. Mark 14:53-65 – The second trial: Jesus before Caiaphas, the ruling high priest

1. Mark 14:53 – *They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together* . After leaving Annas' presence, Jesus was next taken to the house of Caiaphas where many **leaders** of Israel were gathered. This was a second predawn trial. It was a little more involved than the previous trial before Annas.
2. Mark 14:54 – *Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire* . This hearing happened while Peter was in the **courtyard** warming himself by the fire and repeatedly denying His Lord.
3. Mark 14:55 – *Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any.* This was a **phony** trial. They were trying to find testimony they

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could use against Jesus, but it needed to represent something worthy of death. This was an exercise in futility since Jesus was not a sinner.

4. Mark 14:56 – *For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent* . There were lots of false witnesses. Based on lies, their testimonies were faulty and **inconsistent**. They were likely paid to testify against Jesus. This was a desperate strategy to find something against the Lord. It is amazing how badly they wanted Him dead.
5. Mark 14:57-58 – *Some stood up and began to give false testimony against Him, saying, “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’”* This of course was a total **distortion** of what Jesus said.
 - a. Jesus did not say **He** was going to destroy the temple. His statement was directed at them: “ *[You] destroy this temple and I will raise it up again in three days* .” John 2:19-22
 - b. When Jesus made that statement most who heard it scoffed. They said it took over 40 years to construct the temple. How could He *raise it up*, or rebuild it, in three days? That would be impossible. But Jesus was saying **they** would destroy His body and in three days He would come back to life. John 2:21
6. Mark 14:59 – *Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent* . *The law said no one was to be put to death on a single testimony. Deuteronomy 19:15 states emphatically, “A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.”*
7. Mark 14:60 – *The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?”* During this process of false accusations and lies, Jesus did not **defend** Himself. Their questions did not deserve a response. 1 Peter 2:23
 - a. Caiaphas stood up and walked over to the now bound Lord Jesus and tried to elicit a reaction. He asked Him if He was going to answer, but Jesus remained **silent**.
 - b. Isaiah 53:7 – *He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; Like a **lamb** that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.*
8. Mark 14:61 – *But He kept silent and did not answer. Again, the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”* Jesus remained quiet until this **valid** question was made. Yes, He was the Christ the Son of the Blessed One! The high priest asked a valid question to which Jesus replied with the affirmative.
9. Mark 14:62 – *And Jesus said, “I am; and you shall see the son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.”* Jesus answered that He was Messiah. He did not deny this **fact**. John 1:19-23
 - a. Jesus was not only the Christ, but He predicted that they would all see Him seated on the **throne** and coming with the clouds of heaven. Daniel 7:9-10
 - b. Since they would all see this, it likely speaks of the future day of **judgement** when the dead will stand before a great white throne to be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ. As the saying goes, you can either embrace Him now as savior or face Him then as judge. Revelation 20:11-15
10. Mark 14:63 – *Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, “What further need do we have of witnesses?”* The high priest reacted to this in a cultural way that showed great sorrow, **shock** or disgust (Gen. 37:29, Acts 14:14). Anyone watching would immediately interpret Jesus’ words as sacrilege.
11. Mark 14:64 – *“You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?”* *And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.* After tearing his clothing in a public show of horror and disgust, the high priest accused Jesus of the sin of **blasphemy**.
 - a. He was right only if Jesus was **not** the Messiah.
 - b. The problem is, He was and **is** the Messiah, the promised Christ. When Caiaphas reacted this way, they immediately condemned Jesus as worthy of death.
12. Mark 14:65 – *Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, “Prophecy!”* The officers **despised** Him with slaps in the face. At the end of the trial in Annas’ home, He received a slap on the face. At the end of this trial, He was spit on, beaten with fists, openly mocked and again slapped in the face.

C. John 18:25-27 – Jesus’ prophecy about Peter’s denial fulfilled

1. John 18:25 – *Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, “You are not also one of His disciples, are you?”* *He denied it, and said, “I am not .”* Here we **return** to where we left Peter warming himself in the courtyard of the high priest’s home. Luke 22:54-62

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- a. Who were these people standing by the fire? They were a mixed **group** of guards and slaves. Since they were in the courtyard that joined Caiaphas' and Annas' homes, these were not likely Roman soldiers.
 - b. This was the **second** time Peter denied Jesus with the words, "I am not."
 - c. The Gospel of Mark gives some commentary on the disciples' **failure**. Mark 14:27 – *And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, because it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered'."* Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:26-31, 66-72; Luke 22:54-62
2. John 18:26 – *One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"* This is another minor detail only an **eyewitness** would know.
- a. Of all the Gospel writers, John is the only one who mentioned Malchus by **name**.
 - b. John was not only familiar with this slave but also **knew** the details of his relationship to Malchus. John 18:10
3. John 18:27 – *Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.* After a third denial, the **rooster** crowed just as the Lord had prophesied. John 13:38
- a. It is interesting that John did not include the fact that Peter **cursed** in his denials nor did he bring out that fact that Peter had gone away and wept. Mark 14:71-72
 - b. His purpose in including this story was obviously not to bring Peter shame or to show the dark side of his humanity; rather it was to prove that Jesus' predictions were **literally** fulfilled.