



27. Arrest and Trial

Mark 14:43–15:20; Matthew 26:47–27:31;
Luke 22:47–23:25; John 18:2–19:17a.

Carravagio "The Taking of Christ"

“And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men.” (1 Nephi 19:9)

The Arrest and Trial Narratives

The perils of harmonization: even though the four gospels follow a basic progression, perhaps found in the primitive passion narrative, there are significant **variations**

- **Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus** (Mark 14:43–52; Matt 26:47–56; Luke 22:47–53; John 18:2–3)
- **Jesus Before the Jewish Authorities** (Mark 14:53–65; Matt 26:57–68; Luke 22:54–71; John 18–28)
- **Jesus in the Hands of the Romans** (Mark 15:1–21; Matt 27:1–32; Luke 23:1–32; John 18:29–19:17a)
- Be careful about the issue of **culpability**—that is, who was responsible for the arrest, conviction, and execution of Jesus
 - First, Jesus **needed to die** to complete the atoning act of redemption and to put him in a position to overcome death through the atoning act of resurrection
 - Second, the passion narratives signal **parallel acts of abuse, cruelty, and judgment** on the parts of both Jews and Romans
 - **Jews** = Israel, the people of God
 - **Romans** = Gentiles, all other people
 - Third, because we are all sinners and are all mortals, **we are *all* responsible**
- **Prophesied Suffering: Rejection, mocking, physical abuse, false judgment, and condemnation**
 - These experiences all are a part of the Savior’s “descending below all things” and were part of **the atoning journey** from Gethsemane to Calvary and at last to Easter morning

Judas and the Betrayal

- **Judas Leads Arresting Party to Jesus** (Mark 14:43; Matt 26:47; Luke 22:47a; John 18:2-3)
 - Servants of the high priest and presumably temple police or a Jewish guard
 - Roman involvement at this stage unclear but possible
 - use of the Greek *speira* in John 18:3 for “band of soldiers” might mean a Roman cohort (military company) but not definitively
- **Judas Identifies Jesus with a Kiss** (Mark 14:44-46; Matt 26:48–50; Luke 22:47b–48)
 - A kiss may have been a customary greeting of a teacher by a disciple
 - Functioned to identify Jesus among other similar looking men in a dark setting
 - It is *Jesus* who notes the irony of Judas’ kiss representing his betrayal
- Judas’ motivations?
 - Unclear, although many have been suggested: greed, disaffection, disappointment in his messianic expectations, trying to “force the hand” of Jesus, etc.
- Was it necessary?
 - Judas’ act made Jesus’ arrest possible or at least easier that night, but the Jewish authorities or Roman soldiers could have found him eventually
 - The importance of the act was in that Jesus, who needed to “descend below all” **experienced the terrible act of betrayal**



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The Arrest

- **Jesus’ “I Am” Proclamation to the Arresting Party** (John 18:4–8a)
 - **The Power of the Johannine Jesus**: “As soon then as he had said unto them, **I am he**, they went backward, and fell to the ground.” (John 18:6; note the use of the divine name “I Am”)
 - Perhaps just Jewish shock and revulsion at hearing the divine name YHWH pronounced
 - Perhaps a visible sign of the power of Jehovah’s name
- **Jesus Intervenes for His Disciples** (John 18:8b–9)
 - **Christ’s concern for his disciples in Luke** 22:40 realized in John 18:8-9
 - “. . . Let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, of them which thou gavest me have I lost none”
- **Servant of the High Priest Wounded** (Mark 14:47; Matt 26:51; Luke 22:49–50; John 18:10)
 - **Jesus Rebukes the Defending Disciple** (Matt 26:52–54; Luke 22:51a; John 18:11)
 - **Jesus Heals the High Priest’s Servant** (Luke 22:51b; restored JST Mark 14:47)
 - John names him Malchus
- **Jesus Rebukes the Arresting Party** (Mark 14:48-50; Matt 26:55–56a; Luke 22:52–53)
 - “. . . Are you come out as against a thief [*ἄστῆν*] in the night?”
 - *Lḗstēs* means “bandit, insurrectionist, violent revolutionary, or ‘insurgent’”
- **Disciples Abandon Jesus** (Mark 14:50; Matt 26:56b)
 - **Young Man in the Linen Cloth** (Mark 14:51-52)
 - Many interesting suggestions, but the primary image may be that while the disciples had given all to follow Jesus, they are **now willing to give up everything to abandon him and escape**

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Jesus Before the Jewish Authorities

(Mark 14:53–65; Matt 26:57–68; Luke 22:54–71; John 18–28)

- **Jesus before the former High Priest Annas** (John 18:12–14; 19–24)
 - Father-in-law of Caiaphas, Annas had been high priest himself from A.D. 6-15
 - Position of high priest had become a political appointment under the Herods; the Roman prefect or governor inherited the right to appoint or dismiss
 - The “other disciple” (John?) was “known unto then high priest” and gained access for himself and Peter
- **Jesus Mocked by the Jewish Guards** (Mark 14:65; Matt 26:67–68; Luke 22:63–65)
 - Foreshadows the mocking he will suffer at the hands of the Romans
- **Jesus Before the High Priest/Caiaphas** (Mark 14:54–65; Matt 26:57–68; Luke 22:66–71 [*after* the denial and the mocking]; John 18:24, 28)
 - Traditionally this has been examined as “The Jewish Trial of Jesus”
 - Scholars and Church commentators have noted the various irregularities (although much of this is based on later Mishnah evidence)
 - It was most likely a legal hearing, trying to establish the charges that would be given to Pilate
 - False witnesses fail to establish the charge of planning to destroy the temple
 - **Blasphemy is settled upon when he does not deny that he is the Son of God**

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Peter's Denial

(Mark 14:66–72; Matt 26:69–75;

Luke 22:54–62; John 18:15–18; 25–27)

- First denial: woman servant at the gate
- Second denial: one of the men warming self at the fire
- Third denial
 - One or more who recognize that Peter and Christ were both Galileans (synoptics)
 - Brother of Malchus, servant of the healed-ear fame
- “Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, ‘Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.’” (Matt 26:74-75)
- Denials are knowing Jesus, being one of his followers, having been with him
 - They are **not** denials that Jesus is the Christ or the Son of God, testimonies that came to Peter by revelation



Carl Bloch, "Renunciation of Peter"

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Why the Denial?

- Suggestions that it was a command rather than a prophecy do not find definitive support in Greek grammar
 - Again, as in the case of Peter (he had to be “Rocky” not “Rockette”) the discussion may be academic—**Jesus was not speaking Greek!**
 - **Mark and Matthew’s** “you *shalt* deny me thrice” is a future, probably a “predicative future” but it *could* be an “imperative future”
 - **Luke and John** actually write “before” or “till thou has denied me thrice,” using constructions that use a subjunctive verb here, not a future (i.e., in these two gospels it **cannot** be a command)
- President Kimball’s “Peter My Brother” talk is often cited
 - it stresses Peter’s repentance and subsequent faithfulness
 - “I do not pretend to know what Peter’s mental reactions were nor what compelled him to say what he did that terrible night. But in light of his proven bravery, courage, great devotion, and limitless love for the Master, could we not give him the benefit of the doubt and at least forgive him as his Savior seems to have done so fully?” (“Peter, My Brother,” *BYU Speeches of the Year*, 1971).
- Theologically important issues
 - Jesus is forsaken by almost all, even his friends = **the complete rejection of the Messiah**
 - Even the serious mistake of denying knowing or being a disciple of Jesus was something that Peter could receive forgiveness for and go on and do great things = **emphasizes the power of Christ’s grace**
 - He does **not** deny who Jesus is or the testimony that came to him by revelation

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Jesus in the Hands of the Romans: Overview

(Mark 15:1–21; Matt 27:1–32; Luke 23:1–32; John 18:29–19:17a; see also Huntsman, “Before the Romans,”)

- **Before Pilate** (Mark 15: 2–5; Matt 27:2–14; Luke 23:1–12; John 18:28–38a)
- **Suicide of Judas Iscariot** (Matt 27:3–10)
- **Jesus Before Herod** (Luke 23:6–12)
- **Pilate and the Mob** (Mark 15:6–11; Matt 27:15–23; Luke 23:13–23; John 18:38b–19:12)
- **Pilate Hands Jesus over to Be Crucified** (Mark 15:12–15; Matt 27:24–26; Luke 23:24–26; John 19:13–16)
- **The Soldiers Mock Jesus Preliminary to His Crucifixion** (Mark 15:16–20a; Matt 27:27–31)

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Jesus Brought to Pilate

(Mark 15:1b–2; Matt 27:1b–2; Luke 23:1; John 18:28)

- **The role of the Roman prefect or governor** (only later called a procurator)
 - Defend the borders of his province, **maintain order**, see that taxes are collected
 - In Judea the governor had few troops under his command, probably only 2,500 locally raised auxiliary troops and 500 cavalry
 - **Roman administration was dependant upon local aristocracies and collaborators: here mainly the Sanhedrin**
- **Pilate's career:**
 - An equestrian official (from the second tier of Roman society, under the level of a senator)
 - Governed Judea A.D. 26-36
 - Joseph **Caiaphas**, the high priest and head of the Sanhedrin was in office from A.D. 18-37, **longer than Pilate!**
 - **Early years as governor were plagued with mistakes and overreactions, so he was worried about riot now**
 - Pilate's patron in Rome, Seianus, had just fallen from power and been executed: **Pilate was worried about being seen as disloyal to the emperor Tiberius**

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The Charge and the Trial

- The Accusation of the Jewish Authorities (Luke 23:2; John 18:29–32)
 - The Jewish leaders moved from the religious charge of **blasphemy** (claiming to be the Son of God) to a **political charge** (claiming to be a king)
- Usually non-citizens would be tried by local courts
 - A Roman trial was called for if the case involved a Roman citizen, if two subjects came from different jurisdictions, or if **provincial or imperial security was threatened**
- **Could the Sanhedrin and other Jewish courts inflict capital punishment? Still an open question . . .**
 - **John 18:31 seems to suggest that it was not "lawful" for "the Jews" to put anyone to death (Roman Law? Jewish Law about Passover?)**
 - **The Jews could and did execute people in the Roman period for religious infractions**
- If the Jewish authorities could have stoned Jesus for **blasphemy**, what was the advantage of having the Roman convict him on a **political charge** (claiming to be a king and hence inciting rebellion) and having him crucified?
 - **Crucifixion was the equivalent of "hanging him on a tree" (Deuteronomy 21:23), and would thus demonstrate that Jesus was cursed according to the Mosaic law**
 - Paul wrote that Christ "was made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Galatians 3:13)

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Pilate and Jesus

- Pilate Questions Jesus Publicly (Mark 15:2–5; Matt 27:11–14; Luke 23:3–5)
 - On the charge of treason
 - “Art thou the King of the Jews”
 - “Thou sayest it”
 - Chief priests and elders accuse him “of many things”
- Pilate Interviews Christ Privately (John 18:33–38a)
 - **The private interviews between Pilate and Christ are unique to John**
 - Necessitated in the Fourth Gospel by the fact that Passover is approaching and the Jewish authorities do not want to defile themselves by going inside the Roman headquarters with Christ
 - **Who, then, would have been John’s source for this?**
 - A guard? A translator? Revelation? **Jesus himself?**
 - Where was this?
 - Traditionally the Fortress Antonia but probably the Palace of Herod the Great, that the governors had occupied (cf. “lithostroton” argument)

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What is Truth?

- *“Pilate therefore said unto him, ‘Art thou a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘Thou sayest that I am a king. **To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.**”* (John 18:37)
- *“Pilate saith unto him, **‘What is truth?’** And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, **‘I find in him no fault at all.’**”* (John 18:38)
 - Discussions of truth were common in Greek philosophy—did Pilate now see Jesus as more of a philosopher or religious leader and not as a political threat?
- Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come (D&C 93:24)
 - Here this can be interpreted in purely Christological terms: **truth consists of knowing who Christ really is, was, and will yet be, a sure knowledge of which is the essence of His kingdom.**
 - When Pilate terminates the hearing by asking “What is truth?” he is not so much asking a philosophical question as he is **judging himself, revealing that he has failed to recognize the Truth embodied right before him**

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Jesus Before Herod Antipas (Luke 23:6–12)

- **Luke's addition of an interrogation by Herod Antipas**
 - Jesus was from Galilee and Antipas ruled Galilee
 - Although in this period, crimes were tried where they were committed not where the defendant lived
 - Probably represents Pilate's soliciting an "expert opinion"
 - He did not know the ins and outs of Jewish law, customs, etc.
- Interestingly parallel to Paul's trials in Acts . . .
- Jesus does not speak to Herod Antipas
- *Antipas sends him back to Pilate in "gorgeous" (clean, white, shining) robe, perhaps indicative of innocence!*
 - Later Pilate says, "Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold I, having examined him before you, have not fault in this man touching those things wherof ye accuse him; **No, nor yet Herod . . .**"

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Pilate and the Mob

(Mark 15:6–11; Matt 27:15–23; Luke 23:13–23; John 18:38b–19:12)

- Pilate **Plans to Flog** and Release Jesus (**Luke 23:13–17**)
- Barabbas or Jesus? (Mark 15:6–11; Matt 27:15–23; Luke 23:18–19, 24–25a; John 18:38b–40)
 - **The mob chooses Barabbas ("Son of the Father") over Jesus "who is called Christ" and demands that Jesus be crucified**
- Pilate Has Christ **Scourged and Mocked** (John 19:1–3)
- Pilate Presents Jesus to the Mob (John 19:4–7)
 - *Ecce Homo*, "Behold the man!"
 - **Did he hope that the sight of the hurt and bleeding Jesus would soften their demands?**
- Pilate Again Interviews Christ Privately (John 19:8–11: Whence art thou?)
- Pilate Again Tries to Release Jesus (Luke 23:20–23; John 19:12)



Quentin Massys, "Ecce Homo" (1520)

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Pilate Hands Jesus over to Be Crucified (Mark

15:12–15; Matt 27:24–26; Luke 23:24–26; John 19:13–16)

- Pilate “washes” his hands (Matt 27:24)
 - Probably an affected Jewish rather than a Roman custom
- “Then answered all the people, and said, ‘His blood be on us, and on our children . . .’” (Matt 27:25)
 - Who were “all the people?” The crowd that had joyously received him on Palm Sunday or the servants, clients, and followers of the Jerusalem leadership?
 - **The problem of perceived anti-Semitism in the gospels (especially Matthew and John)**
 - Terrible things have been done to Jews by “Christians” because of the charge of **deicide**, “having killed God”
 - Maier, “Who Killed Jesus,” 17, writes: “Matthew’s text proves nothing, since there is not record of God endorsing the curse, and God, after all, is the one whose curse would mean anything. As a rabbi once put to me (with good humor): ‘Even if God *had* agreed to curse us on that occasion, his divine anger would have been limited to the third or fourth generation, and the rest of us would have been free of it!’”
 - **Could “being covered with his blood” be more symbolic than anyone knew? *Is not the goal of Jesus’ atoning redemption to cover our sins with his blood?***
- Pilate “willing to content the people” (Mark 15:15) gives in
 - The cry of the Johannine “Jews” saying, “If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend” (John 19:12) may have been a veiled threat
 - Opened Pilate himself up to the charge of treason (*maiestas*) in not defending the dignity of the emperor!
- “Delivered Jesus to **their** will” (Luke 23:25) and “delivered he him therefore unto **them** to be crucified” (John 19:16a) are ambiguous
 - Clearly the Jews did not themselves crucify Jesus, but the parallelism and shared culpability suggests that they are as responsible as the Romans

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The Soldiers Mock Jesus Preliminary to His Crucifixion (Mark 15:16–20a; Matt 27:27–31)

- The **threat of scourging in Luke** and **earlier whipping of Jesus in John** may have been attempts to palliate the mob but still allow Jesus to be released
- **Mark and Matthew**, however, record **terrible scourging that was part of the capital punishment** Pilate had just declared
 - Meant to traumatize and weaken the body in order to make crucifixion kill more quickly
 - The preliminary mocking—dressing him a purple robe, pressing the crown of thorns upon his brow, and giving him a “scepter” to carry—was meant to ridicule the charge that he was, in fact, a king
 - John, lacking the latter, more severe scourging, adds this scene
 - Perhaps out of sensitivity, **Luke omits the scourging and the mocking**

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The Mocking and Scourging

“. . . is the placement of the scourging by Matthew and Mark after the final judgment correct, did John move it for dramatic purposes, or were there really two? Was it a flogging preliminary to execution, or was it a whipping meant to serve as a chastisement, excite pity, or reach a compromise punishment?

“In the end, however, the type and timing of the scourging are not in and of themselves important.

Instead, the fulfillment of prophecies regarding this suffering make this incident a fundamental part of the Atonement accomplished by Jesus Christ. While Jesus had himself predicted the scourging and humiliation that He would suffer, some of the most powerful recorded prophecies of the abuse and mockery are found in the Book of Mormon in such passages as 1 Nephi 19:9, 2 Nephi 6:9, and Mosiah 3:9.

“The focus there is not with when and how the scourging, hitting, and spitting took place, but why. **Christ was willing to suffer these things ‘because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men.’**” (Huntsman, 316-317, emphasis added)



Titian, “The Crown of Thorns”

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Conclusion

“While those details remain unknown, **what remains important is that judgment took place**, and it is both significant and ironic that the two ‘trials’ of Jesus took place before the two peoples who were most dedicated to and obsessed by law. **Just as the two trials reflect the two realities of Christ’s identity—as both Son of God and King—so the Jews and the Romans represent all Gentiles and all of Israel** (Acts 4:27).

“Examining the trial should not be for us an issue of assigning culpability—to Judas, the chief priests, or Pilate—for the betrayal and condemnation were necessary parts of the Atonement. As Wright has recently written, all of us have a share in what each of them did in that they reflect the bad in all of us. Likewise, Bammel has observed that **‘Everyone becomes guilty (Luke 24:7) so that everyone might have a share in the fruits of Christ’s death.’**” (Huntsman, 317)

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