

Luke 22:66-71

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The Sanhedrin Council convenes in their temple courtroom to officially try Jesus at dawn. They expeditiously follow the same line of arguments that Caiaphas employed to condemn Jesus of blasphemy in Jesus's second religious trial a short while earlier. As soon as Jesus confirms He is the Christ and Son of God, the Council is ready to convict and condemn Him without any further testimony.

This event is known as Jesus's Sunrise Trial

The parallel gospel accounts of this event are found in Matthew 27:1-2 and Mark 15:1.

- Note: Throughout this portion of commentary, each time a Jewish law was broken by the chief priests and elders as they prosecuted *Jesus*, we identify that rule by means of brackets—i.e. [Rule 2: Neutrality]. The numbering of these rules is according to The Bible Says series about the Religious Prosecution of *Jesus*.

For a complete listing of the broken rules see The Bible Says Article: [Jesus's Trial, Part 1. The Laws Broken By The Religious Leaders: A Summary.](#)

Luke continues his narrative of *Jesus's* final hours leading up to *His* crucifixion by discussing *Jesus's* third and final religious trial in front of the Sanhedrin *Council of elders* and *chief priests* just after sunrise. This trial is called *Jesus's Sunrise Trial* before the Sanhedrin. Luke provides the details of *Jesus's* official religious trial which was summarized by Matthew:

“Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against *Jesus* to put Him to death.”
(Matthew 27:1)

Jesus's Sunrise Trial in front of *the Council* took place at dawn, probably between 5:30-6:00 am, on the morning of Nisan 15 (Friday morning by Roman reckoning).

To learn more about the timing and sequencing of these events, see The Bible Says' [“Timeline: Jesus's Final 24 Hours.”](#)

There were a total of three religious trials that *Jesus* underwent between *His* arrest in the early morning hours at Gethsemane (Luke 22:47-53) and being handed over to Pilate shortly after dawn (Luke 23:1; Matthew 27:2; Mark 15:1; John 18:28). These three trials were:

1. *Jesus's Preliminary Trial* in the home of Annas, the former *high priest* (John 18:12-14; 19-24)
2. *Jesus's Night-Time Trial* in the home of Caiaphas, the sitting *high priest* (Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54; John 18:24)
3. *Jesus's Sunrise Trial* before the Sanhedrin (Matthew 27:1-2; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71)

To learn more about Jesus's Preliminary Trial, please see the Bible Says commentary for [John 18:12-14](#).

To learn more about Jesus's second religious trial in the home of Caiaphas, see the Bible Says commentary beginning in [Matthew 26:57-58](#).

John alone describes the first trial. Matthew and Mark describe the second, while Luke and John mention or allude to it. And Luke describes the third trial with Matthew and Mark providing short summaries of it. No single Gospel narrative describes all three of Jesus's religious trials in detail. But together the Gospel narratives complement each other to provide a complete picture of what happened to Jesus following *His* arrest and before *He* was handed over to the Romans for *His* civil trial.

To better understand the sequence of these events, please see The Bible Says article, ["Jesus's Trial, Part 3. The 5 Stages Of Jesus's Religious Prosecution."](#)

As just stated, Luke almost entirely skips over the first two of Jesus's religious trials, and almost exclusively focuses on the third and final one. The reason for this is likely because Jesus's third religious trial was *His* official trial. It carried the legal weight and authority to condemn Jesus that the previous trials lacked. Despite its official status, Jesus's Sunrise Trial was no less illegitimate than the previous two trials.

The outcome of Jesus's Preliminary Trial was little more than a bruise on Jesus's face and a bruise on Annas's ego as the former high priest failed to discover or manufacture a charge while the Sanhedrin gathered in the home of Caiaphas.

The outcome of the second trial was almost a second failure, until Caiaphas put Jesus under oath and asked if *He* was the Messiah (Matthew 26:63). When Jesus answered that *He* was and that they would see *Him* sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds (Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62), Caiaphas (illegally) ripped his garments and charged Jesus with the crime of blasphemy (Matthew 26:65; Mark 14:63-64). *The Council* swiftly convicted Jesus and condemned Him to death in the single vote (Matthew 26:66; Mark 14:64). The second trial was a success in the eyes of Jesus's enemies because it discovered a path to condemn Him to death.

But even though the second trial ended in a conviction and a sentencing, it could not be deemed legitimate because it occurred at night [Rule 5: Illegal Timing] and it was in the home of one of the judges [Rule 6: Illegal Location].

Hence the need for this third trial which took place in the proper location and technically by the barest of margins at day. The third trial was Jesus's official trial and it allowed the judges to claim at least the semblance of legality. In reality it was no more legal or legitimate than the previous two religious trials of Jesus.

Luke covers the third trial possibly because it was the official legal trial of Jesus and not a preliminary interrogation as the first one was, or the trial run of the actual trial—like the second one was. Recall how his stated goal was to report events in such a way that his readers might "know the exact truth about the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:4).

Luke also may have focused on the third trial because he was aware that Matthew and Mark had already discussed the others extensively, but only mentioned the third trial, and so felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to write about the final one.

In any case, the last time Luke had discussed Jesus, *He* was being beaten and mocked by the men who were detaining him as *He* awaited His morning trial (Luke 22:63-65). This abuse of Jesus most likely took place after *His* second trial in the home of Caiaphas and is distinct from the initial round of mistreatment *He* received upon being condemned, as described by Matthew and Mark in their accounts (Matthew 26:67-68; Mark 14:65).

The commentary for this section of scripture is subdivided as:

1. **THE COUNCIL CONVENES**
(Luke 22:66)
2. **THE PROSECUTION BEGINS**
(Luke 22:67a)
3. **JESUS RESPONDS**
(Luke 22:68-69)
4. **JESUS IS CONDEMNED**
(Luke 22:70-71)

1. THE COUNCIL CONVENES

(Luke 22:66)

Luke begins describing Jesus's Sunrise Trial before the Sanhedrin—His third and official religious trial this way:

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 (v 66).

The *Him* in this sentence refers to Jesus.

Luke's phrase, *when it was day*, lets us know that he is not describing Jesus's first or second trials which occurred at night. The second indicator that this trial is separate from Jesus's first two trials is its location. Luke discloses that the location is *their council chamber*.

The *council chamber* was located on the temple grounds, and was the official courtroom of the Sanhedrin. In the first century A.D., the Jews referred to the *council chamber* as "The Hall of Hewn Stones." The *council chamber* was different from the locations of the first trial (Annas's house—John 18:3, 19-24) and the second trial (Caiaphas's house—Matthew 26:57-66; John 18:25). The timing and location of both of Jesus's first two religious trials were illegal:

- No trial involving a crime with a possible sentence of death could occur at night.
[Rule 5: Illegal Timing]
- All trials had to be administered in a public predetermined location.
[Rule 6: Illegal location]

By having Jesus's official trial when it was day in *their* public, predetermined *council chamber*, the Council of elders partially rectified the issue of location but only partially rectified the issue of illegal timing.

Even though it was technically declared to be *day*, Jesus's official religious trial was still too early to be legal because there were to be no trials until after the morning sacrifices had been performed. These sacrifices typically were conducted around 9:00 am. Mark tells us that Jesus was already being crucified by 9:00 am (Mark 15:25).

Jesus's civil trial lasted around three hours, so *His* official Sunrise Trial (which probably occurred sometime between 5:30-6:00 am) was still well beyond the authorized bounds to be legal. This also matches how Matthew introduces this trial: "When morning came..." (Matthew 27:1). Despite it being *day*, it was still far too early to legally conduct a trial.

Moreover, there were to be no trials on a Sabbath or Feast Day. The date was most likely Nisan 15 which was the first day of the seven-day festival of Unleavened Bread. And the day before was Passover. Under no circumstances should Jesus's trials have taken place during any of these days—but because the *elders of the people, chief priests, and scribes* were eager to have *Him* put to death (Matthew 26:59) they ignored their own laws.

Therefore, Jesus's third and official religious trial was in the legally proper location—the *council chamber* of the Sanhedrin, but it still broke multiple laws regarding its timing [Rule 5: Illegal Timing].

Additionally, Jesus's third trial also broke the following judicial principles and laws of legal practice the instant it began:

- **Rule 1: Conspiracy**—The judges had plotted to kill Jesus.
- **Rule 2: Neutrality**—The judges hated Jesus.
- **Rule 3: Rigged Trial**—The outcome was predetermined.
- **Rule 4: Bribery**—The trial was based on a bribe.

As this trial progressed, we will continue to see how it broke more judicial laws.

Luke tells us that *the Council of elders of the people assembled* as soon as *it was* declared to be *day*. The trial took place at the earliest possible moment of the day, so that Jesus could be executed by the Romans before *His* followers could rally the people, and so that the religious leaders could go on to perform their duties for the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The Council of elders of the people is Luke's way of describing the Sanhedrin Council to his Greek audience.

The Sanhedrin *Council* was the highest Jewish legal authority in the land. It was comprised of 71 judges. During the era of the second temple, the Pharisees (*elders* and teachers of the law) were given twenty-four seats, the *scribes* (lawyers who were affiliated with the Pharisees) were given twenty-two seats, and the Sadducees (*chief priests*) were given twenty-four seats. The high priest, who was a Sadducee, presided over its affairs. Thus, the Pharisees were given the majority vote, and the Sadducees were given administrative leadership.

The reason *the Council* was assembled at such an early hour was to officially condemn Jesus to death (Matthew 27:1). *They* would use similar arguments to those employed by Caiaphas (during Jesus's second trial) to produce a swift outcome. Thus, Jesus's second trial served as a sort of rehearsal for *His* third one with the arguments and verdict already predetermined and largely scripted [Rule 3: Rigged Trial].

They led Him away bound from where *they* were holding *Him* in custody, which was probably in or near Caiaphas's house, *to their council chamber*. Caiaphas's home is believed to have been located in the Upper Quarter of Jerusalem, in the southwestern part of the city. If so, it was in the Essene district, not far from where Jesus celebrated the Passover with *His* disciples when this night first began. The Sanhedrin's *council chamber*, as previously mentioned, was located on the temple grounds. The temple complex was in the northeastern part of the city, about a third of a mile *away*.

Jesus's third trial was much more orderly than the circus-like tribunal in the home of the high priest. There was no need to awaken and gather the Sanhedrin judges from their homes, find false witnesses, manufacture evidence, or craft charges. With the pre-packaged arguments in hand and the process already rehearsed, Jesus's official trial was spared the confusion and chaos of the second trial.

2. THE PROSECUTION BEGINS

(Luke 22:67a)

With precious little time before the city of Jerusalem awakened and filled with worshippers, and the business of the Festival of Unleavened Bread commenced, Jesus's third trial went straight to the point.

Following the questioning established by Caiaphas, the trial began interrogating Jesus to recreate the crime of blasphemy (Matthew 26:63):

They were saying to Him: "If You are the Christ, tell us" (v 67a).

Jesus's third trial was not so much about trying to discover whether or not Jesus committed a crime as it was to stage things and set *Him* up so that *He* would do something *the assembled Council* could claim was a crime. This was a gross perversion of justice.

Moreover, *their* approach violated multiple Jewish laws.

- **Rule 7: Lack of a Charge**—The trial was not based on a charge of a previously committed crime, it was based on trying to stage a new one.
- **Rule 8: Lack of Defense**—The trial did not begin with a statement on behalf of the defendant as required by Jewish law.
- **Rule 9: Lack of Evidence**—The trial was not weighing evidence of a previously committed crime; the accusers were trying to create evidence to use for condemning Jesus.

- **Rule 12: Improper Prosecution**—Judges could not act as an advocate for or against the defendant, but Jesus’s judges were also prosecuting Him.
- **Rule 13: Forced Self-Incrimination**—It was unlawful to use a defendant’s testimony about himself.**3. JESUS RESPONDS**
(Luke 22:67b-69)

Jesus responded to *their question* with two observations about *their* unjust prosecution:

But He said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer” (vs 67-68).

Jesus had already answered this *question* earlier during the second trial, when Caiaphas put *Him* under oath. *He told them He was the Christ/Messiah.*

“Jesus said to him, ‘You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’”
(Matthew 26:64)

“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.’”
(Mark 14:62)

At that earlier time, when Jesus answered their *question*, the high priest had torn his robes and accused Jesus of blasphemy without considering the possible truth of *His* statement, much less believing *Him* (Matthew 26:65; Mark 14:63-64a). *They* then all condemned *Him* to death and viciously beat and cruelly mocked *Him* for His response (Matthew 26:66-68; Mark 14:64b-65; Luke 22:63-65).

Jesus correctly anticipated a total rejection by *them* again. This was why *He* told *them*: *If I tell you the truth, you will not believe.* Jesus also observed: *And if I ask a question, you will not answer Me.*

In saying these things *to them*, Jesus was pointing at *His* accusers and telling *them* that *they* had no interest in their question, or the truth. *They* only wanted to hear *Him* say something that *they* could use to condemn *Him*.

The implication of these observations was that because of *their* wickedness, *He* had no obligation to *answer their question.*

But *Jesus* answered *the Council’s* question (again) anyway. *He* answered it similarly to how *He* prophetically answered Caiaphas (Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62) during *His* second trial.

“But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God” (v 69).

The term: *Son of Man* was a clear Messianic term. It was one that *Jesus* often used to describe Himself.

To learn more about the meaning of this term, see The Bible Says article: [“Son of Man.”](#)

The term *right hand of the power of God* is a reference to *God* and His throne.

As *He* had answered Caiaphas, Jesus’s *answer* was an explicit reference to well established Messianic prophecies in Daniel regarding a powerful vision of the Ancient of Days and *the Son of Man*.

Daniel prophesied:

“I kept looking
Until thrones were set up,
And the Ancient of Days took His seat.”
(Daniel 7:9a)

“I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.”
(Daniel 7:13)

Regarding *the Son of Man*, Daniel described:

“And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.”
(Daniel 7:14)

In stating this Messianic prophecy as a response to *the Council’s* demand: *If You are the Christ/Messiah, tell us*; Jesus was claiming that this prophecy was about Himself. And *Jesus* was implying the same thing *He* previously stated in His response to Caiaphas’s demand.

His inference was that one day everyone *assembled* in that *council chamber* would recognize *Him* as *the Christ/Messiah* that He was when they saw *Him seated at the right hand of the power of God*.

Jesus offered the fulfillment of this future event as the final proof of His claims.

At that future time, no one will contend that He is the LORD’s Messianic Servant, and their conniving arguments against Him will be as worthless and worn out as a moth-eaten garment (Isaiah 50:9). Every one of *their* tongues which condemn *Him* now will then confess that Jesus

Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:11). But *they* will be set on fire by the torches of *their* own arguments and will lie down in torment (Isaiah 50:11).

4. JESUS IS CONDEMNED

(Luke 22:70-71)

The assembled Council was likely delighted with Jesus's vivid *answer*. Their twisted hearts probably rejoiced when *He said* what *they* believed to be blasphemy. But *they* still desired a clearer, simpler response for the conviction record.

And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" (v 70a).

They were asking *Him* to clarify one more time if by *His* previous statement *Jesus* was claiming to be *God* (the Messiah and Ancient of Days).

This was exactly Who Jesus was claiming to be.

And He said to them, "Yes, I am" (v 70b).

The expression, Luke used, that is translated as—*Yes, I am*—is the Greek expression: ἐγώ εἰμι. (This expression is pronounced "Eg-ō I-mee"). It is the Greek translation of the sacred name that *God* used to describe Himself to Moses—"YAHWEH (Exodus 3:14). The Jews considered it blasphemous to speak *God's* name.

If *Jesus* answered with this expression, *He* not only spoke *God's* name, but *He* did so while claiming to be *God*. This would have been a blasphemous thing to say for anyone who was not actually *God*. But *the assembled Council*, who was against *Him*, never investigated this claim. *They* simply presumed *He* was not who *He* claimed to be.

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

As Caiaphas boasted earlier (Matthew 26:65; Mark 14:64) so *the assembled Council* boasted now about how *they* did not *need* to follow the laws of Moses, which required *testimony from* two or more witnesses to condemn a man,

"On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness."
(Deuteronomy 17:6)

The rationale that *the assembled Council of elders, priests, and scribes* used to disregard Moses's command was that *they* had all *heard* Jesus say with *His own mouth* what *they* supposed to be blasphemy themselves. *They* would serve as *their own* witnesses. Their *own* laws precluded judges of a case also serving as a witness to the same case. A judge could not provide *testimony* and serve as a witness. [Rule 12: Improper Prosecution]. But this is precisely what this *Council* did.

Moreover, according to Jewish law in cases involving capital punishment, it was unlawful to use a defendant's *testimony* about himself [Rule 13: Forced Self-Incrimination]. The words Jesus said with *His own mouth* during a trial could not be used to either acquit or condemn *Him*. But *the Council* used them to condemn Jesus anyway.

In judging *their own testimony* with *no further need* for the *testimony* of witnesses, and by accepting *words from His own mouth* as their only proof that Jesus deserved to die, *the assembled Council* lacked legally acceptable evidence to charge, must less condemn, Jesus [Rule 9: Lack of Evidence].

Luke does not record the verdict in this trial, as Matthew and Mark did with the second trial (Matthew 26:66; Mark 14:64b). But its outcome is clearly understood that *their* verdict was Jesus was guilty of blasphemy and that they sentenced *Him* to death.

We can infer these things because the trial was set up to produce both outcomes from the beginning; and the next thing they did was to bring *Him* to the Roman Governor Pilate for execution (Luke 23:1-2; 15).

But we know these were the verdict and sentence of Jesus's third trial because Matthew tells us that they were (Matthew 27:1).

If the guilty verdict was unanimous, as it was in Jesus's second trial where "they all condemned Him to be deserving of death" (Mark 14:64), then according to Jewish law the verdict was invalid. The Gospels give no indication that it was not unanimous, and they offer a couple of indicators that it was unanimous.

The judges that previously voted unanimously to condemn Jesus were the same judges *assembled* at this *Council* meeting. Moreover, Luke tells us that at least one *Council* member who was sympathetic to Jesus was not present for His religious trials (Luke 23:50) which could indicate that only *Council* members who were hostile to Jesus were informed to assemble.

If the guilty verdict of Jesus's third religious trial was unanimous, it violated their own judicial laws when it was allowed to stand [Rule 16: Faulty Verdict]

Unlike many Western judicial codes which require all its jury trials to be decided unanimously, according to the Jewish legal code, any guilty verdict that was unanimous automatically triggered the defendant's acquittal.

Jewish verdicts required guilty convictions to be decided by a majority of two or more judges—but not unanimously. At least one judge must decide in favor of the defendant. This was for two reasons:

1. An element of mercy had to be present in every judicial deliberation (Exodus 34:5-7; Zechariah 7:9).
2. The Jews also felt that a unanimous conviction suggested that there was a conspiracy against the defendant because judges announced their verdict one at a time, starting with the youngest. If all twenty-three (or more) judges independently voted guilty, it implied collusion.

The verdict and sentence were issued in the same sitting when they should have been deliberated and decided separately. In cases involving capital punishment, Jewish law required a *death* sentence to be delivered the day after finding the defendant guilty.

In *Jesus's* official religious trial, the sentencing came swiftly after the verdict of guilt was issued. The sentencing was not delivered with the requisite day between the conviction of guilt and condemnation [Rule 17: Hasty Sentence].

Jesus's third and final religious trial was initiated and decided within a span of a few minutes. We know this because *the Council* immediately *when it was day* held their consultation “early in the morning” (Mark 15:1) and according to John, they arrived at the Praetorium on the other side of the temple complex to deliver *Jesus* to Pilate while “it was [still] early” (John 18:28).

This sequence of events began with an unexpected and unnerving alarm shortly after nightfall when Judas warned the priests that *Jesus* was aware of their conspiracy (John 13:21-30). This triggered a flurry of activity gathering priests and elders, procuring a Roman cohort, locating and arresting *Jesus*, interrogating Him in the home of Annas, organizing false witnesses to testify, Caiaphas intervening and charging *Jesus* with blasphemy, and reconvening at sunrise to swiftly try *Jesus* officially.

Through countless perversions of their law, the conspiracy to condemn *Jesus* to death successfully reached its murderous goal.

But having finally condemned *Jesus* to death on religious grounds according to their Jewish courts, the Sanhedrin *Council* then brought *Jesus* before the Roman governor of Judea with the purpose of executing *Him* on the political grounds of insurrection (Luke 23:1-5).

This is the substance of the next section of scripture.

For a detailed explanation of the principles that were broken during *Jesus's* trial, see The Bible Says article: [Jesus's Trial, Part 4. The Judicial Principles That Were Violated.](#)

For a detailed explanation of the other laws that were broken during *Jesus's* trial, see The Bible Says Article: [Jesus's Trial, Part 5. The Laws Of Practice That Were Violated.](#)

Biblical Text

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, **67** “If You are the Christ, tell us.” But He said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe; **68** and if I ask a question, you will not answer. **69** But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” **70** And they all said, “Are You the Son of God, then?” And He said to them, “Yes, I am.” **71** Then they said, “What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.”