

# Matthew 27:1-2

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*Matthew summarizes Jesus's third, and official, religious trial. He says it took place in the morning and tells us that it resulted in condemning Jesus to death. After the predetermined trial concluded, Jesus was immediately brought to Pilate, the Roman governor.*

*This event is known as Jesus's Sunrise Trial.*

The parallel gospel accounts of this event are found in Mark 15:1, Luke 22:66-23:1 and John 18:28.

- 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](#).

Having concluded his narration about Peter and his three denials of *Jesus* (Matthew 26:69-75), Matthew returns to report what happened to *Jesus* after Caiaphas, the high priest, and the Sanhedrin Council convicted *Him* of blasphemy and sentenced *Him* to death during His Night-Time Trial (Matthew 26:57-66). Upon their condemnation of *Jesus*, they proceeded to violently beat and cruelly mock *Him* (Matthew 26:67-68).

In this passage, Matthew summarizes *Jesus's* third and final religious trial which officially sentenced Him to death. This trial is called *Jesus's* Sunrise Trial before the Sanhedrin. Luke narrates the Sunrise Trial in greater detail than Matthew's summary (Luke 22:66-71).

*Jesus's* Sunrise Trial in front of the Council took place at dawn, probably between 5:30-6:00am, 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 was a total of three religious trials that *Jesus* underwent between His arrest in the early *morning* hours at Gethsemane (Matthew 26:47-56) and being handed over to *Pilate* shortly after dawn (Matthew 27:2; Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1; 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](#).

To learn more about Luke's account of Jesus's third religious trial, see the Bible Says commentary page for [Luke 22:66-71](#).

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 full 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."](#)

Matthew's summary of Jesus's third religious trial consists of two statements.

The first statement describes the timing and purpose of the trial: *Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death* (v 1).

The second statement describes the results: *and they bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the governor* (v 2).

The likely reason Matthew summarizes this trial is because it followed the prosecuting arguments of Caiaphas from the second trial almost verbatim (Luke 22:66-71). Therefore, repeating its details was not important to Matthew. The reason Matthew mentioned this trial was likely because it was the official trial of record.

Matthew shifts from the previous scene of *Jesus's* second trial and Peter's denials with the simple phrase: *Now when morning came*.

This phrase also signals a legal importance. Trials involving capital punishment were forbidden to happen at night according to Jewish law. By commenting that *Jesus's* third trial occurred *when morning came*, Matthew reminded his Jewish audience that *Jesus's* previous two trials were illegal because they happened at night [Rule 5: Illegal Timing]. This short introduction also explained to his audience the legal necessity for *Jesus's* third trial.

Mark records that this trial took place "early in the morning" (Mark 15:1). The Sanhedrin also handed *Jesus* over to the Roman authorities while "it was (still) early" (John 18:28). Which suggests this official trial lasted no more than half an hour, probably less.

When we factor in that *Jesus's* Roman trial lasted approximately three hours and that Mark tells us *Jesus* was already being crucified by 9:00 am (Mark 15:25) this indicates that this Sunrise

Trial probably occurred sometime between 5:30 am and 6:00 am. *Morning* had come, but just barely.

Luke also tells us that *Jesus's* third trial took place in the Sanhedrin's "council chamber" (Luke 22:66). The Sanhedrin's council chamber, was referred to as "the Hall of Hewn Stone" and was located on the temple grounds. It was the legally sanctioned place where trials were supposed to be decided.

By relocating and conducting *Jesus's* official trial here, *the chief priests and elders of the people* followed this rule, which they had violated in both the previous two trials. The relocation to the council chamber and their waiting until *morning came* were the Sanhedrin's tacit admissions that their night-time trials were illegal [Rule 5: Illegal Timing; Rule 6: Illegal Location].

And while the location of *Jesus's* official trial was in its authorized setting, the timing was still illegal on two counts.

1. There were to be no trials until after the *morning* sacrifices had been performed. These sacrifices were customarily offered around 9:00 am; and as explained above, *Jesus's* official trial started and finished hours before the time these sacrifices normally occurred.
2. Trials could not proceed on the eve of a Sabbath or on a Feast Day. This day was most likely Nisan 15, which was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The day before, Nisan 14, was preparation day for Passover. *Jesus's* trial took place during these festivals.

Therefore, even though *Jesus's* official trial was technically during the day, it still violated multiple laws concerning when it could take place [Rule 6: Illegal Timing].

Matthew's summary of the trial explains that *all the chief priests and the elders of the people* (respectively the Sadducees and the Pharisees, who sat on the Sanhedrin Council) *conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death*.

This summary shows multiple violations of Jewish judicial law, including:

- **Rule 1: Conspiracy**—The judges *conferred together* for the purpose of murdering *Jesus*.
- **Rule 2: Neutrality**—The judges were *against Jesus*.
- **Rule 3: Rigged Trial**—The outcome *to put Him to death* was predetermined.

Luke's detailed account of *Jesus's* third religious trial also reveals additional laws that were violated to achieve their wicked outcome.

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 (Luke 22:67).
- **Rule 8: Lack of Defense**—The trial did not begin with a statement on behalf of the defendant as required by Jewish law (Luke 22:67).

- **Rule 9: Lack of Evidence**—The trial was not weighing evidence of a previously committed crime; His accusers were trying to create evidence to use for condemning *Jesus* (Luke 22:67).
- **Rule 12: Improper Prosecution**—Judges could not act as an advocate for or against the defendant, but they were prosecuting *Jesus* (Luke 22:67); Neither could they act as witness in a case they were deciding (Luke 22:69).
- **Rule 13: Forced Self-Incrimination**—It was unlawful to use a defendant’s testimony about himself (Luke 22:67-70).
- **Rule 15: Ignoring the Evidence**—The judges never considered the available evidence that *Jesus* was Who He claimed to be (Luke 22:70-71).
- **Rule 16: Faulty Verdict**—The guilty verdict appears to have been unanimous, which should have triggered an automatic acquittal (Luke 22:71).
- **Rule 17: Hasty Sentence**—There had to be a one-day delay between a conviction and the issuing of a death sentence and both were conferred in a matter of minutes (Luke 22:71).

Also *Jesus*’s official trial came to fruition from Judas’s betrayal and payment of thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16), making it illegal [Rule 4: Bribery].

The verdict and condemnation came quickly. *Jesus* would be *put to death* for the religious crime of blasphemy (Luke 22:69-71). It is likely that the religious authorities’ haste came about because *they* desired to have *Jesus* crucified quickly, that He might be killed prior to the Sabbath (John 19:31), in addition to their urgency to eliminate *Jesus* before their plot against *Him* became public.

Having accomplished what *they* came to do (confer *together against Jesus to put Him to death*), all the chief priests and the elders of the people then *bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the governor*.

Because *they* had failed, despite their best efforts, to convict *Jesus* of blaspheming the temple (Matthew 26:59-62; Mark 14:55-60), which the Romans granted them jurisdiction to judge and execute the *death* penalty, the Sanhedrin had to gain Roman approval if *Jesus* was to be *put to death*.

This was why *they* went straight to *Pilate the Roman governor* following His official conviction in their religious court.

Matthew narrates *Jesus*’s political trial before Pilate in Matthew 27:11-26. But in the next sections of his Gospel account, Matthew returns to narrate and explain what happened to Judas, *Jesus*’s betrayer (Matthew 27:3-10).

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**

**Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death; 2 and they bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the governor.**