

The Death of the Messiah

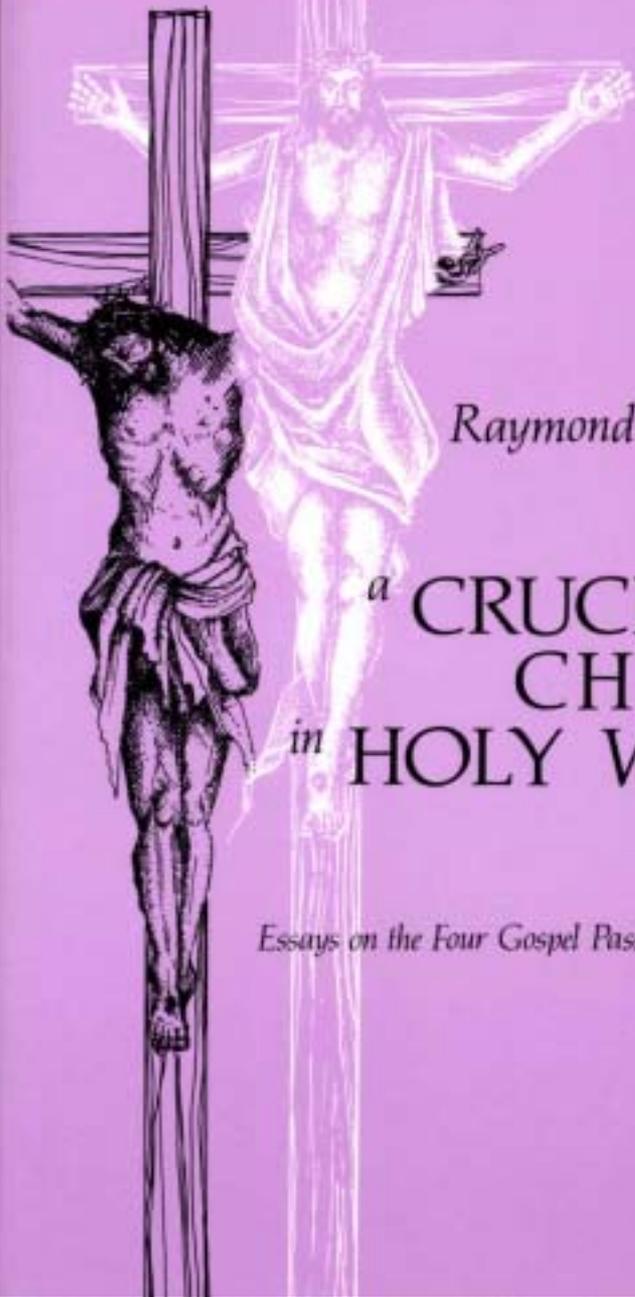
Jesus Before the Jewish Authorities

Series Outline

- **Mar. 14:** 1. Jesus prays and is arrested in Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, Across the Kidron
 - Mark 14:26-52; Matt 26:30-56; Luke 22:39-53; John 18:1-11
- **Mar. 21:** 2. Jesus Before the Jewish Authorities
 - Mark 14:53—15:1; Matt 26:57—27:10; Luke 22:54—23:1; John 18:12-28a

Series Outline

- **Mar. 28:** 3. Jesus before Pilate, the Roman Governor
 - Mark 15:2-20a; Matt 27:11-31a; Luke 23:2-25; John 18:28b—19:16a
- **Apr. 4:** 4. Jesus is crucified and dies on Golgotha. He is buried nearby
 - Mark 15:20b-47; Matt 27:31b-66; Luke 23:26-56; John 19:16b-42



Raymond E. Brown

a CRUCIFIED
CHRIST
in HOLY WEEK

Essays on the Four Gospel Passion Narratives

Each year during Holy Week the Church reads two different accounts of Jesus' passion. On Palm (Passion) Sunday the account is from one of the first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, or Luke), while on Good Friday it is always from John. Thus the liturgy makes it possible to note how very different the Gospel passions are, each one offering a unique vantage point from which to see and understand a crucified Christ.

We have all heard of the seven words of Jesus on the cross. In fact, however, Jesus says only one "word" in Matthew and Mark, three other "words" of very different import in Luke, and still three more different "words" in John. Separating these words as the evangelists intended rather than gluing them together offers Christians a much richer way to understand the demands of the cross in their own lives.

Fr. Raymond E. Brown, S.S., (1928–1998) was the Auburn Distinguished Professor of Biblical Studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Author of some twenty-five books on the Bible and past president of three of the most important biblical societies in the world, by appointment of two popes (Paul VI in 1972, John Paul II in 1996) he was a member of the Roman Pontifical Biblical Commission. *Time* magazine has called him "probably the premier Catholic Scripture scholar in the U.S."

THE DEATH of the MESSIAH

*From Gethsemane to the Grave:
A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*

RAYMOND E. BROWN



VOLUME I

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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 10 years
 - **23 BC:** Roman Senate gave **Caesar Augustus** veto right over itself, effectively ending the Roman Republic

Roman Empire

Caesar Augustus

- **19 BC:** Augustus effectively given *imperium* over all the empire
- **12 BC:** became “high priest,” head of the Roman State Religion (*pontifex maximus*)

Roman Empire

Tiberius Caesar

■ Tiberius Caesar

- **13 AD:** Given *imperium* over the provinces (= chief military commander) 1 year before **Augustus** died
- **14 AD:** After a show of reluctance, let the Senate proclaim him second emperor of Rome after **Augustus** died. Ruled until 37 AD
- Scheming and suspicious
 - **23 AD:** started a reign of terror, in which many senators and members of his family accused of treason and executed

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 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**
 - Sons went to **Augustus** in Rome to petition for rule of Palestine
 - Delegation of Jews went to **Augustus** to petition for end to 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 NE of Lake of Galilee

Roman Governance in Palestine

After the Death of Herod the Great

- **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 Judea (6 AD to 9 AD)
 - Pontius Pilate was the *fifth* Roman Governor of Judea (26 AD to 36 AD)

Roman Governance in Palestine

During Jesus' Life and Ministry

- 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 **Roman Province of Judea**.
 - Governor resided in Caesarea on the coast

Roman Governance in Palestine

Province of Judea

- Syria was an older and more important Province than Judea
 - Governor of Syria was assigned to people of higher social rank and past achievement
 - Had four well-trained, highly professional legions of soldiers at his disposition

Roman Governance in Palestine

Province of Judea

- Judea less important Province
 - Governor of Judea was usually assigned to member of lower social class
 - Had at his disposal five cohorts of soldiers of less professional military quality
 - Mostly non-Jewish *local* recruits from Samaria
 - The legions from Syria brought in only for rebellions and invasions

Roman Governance in Palestine

Province of Judea

■ Governor of Judea

■ Titles:

- “**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* (right to coerce or punish) for the protection of Roman interests, including the power to execute

Background:
**The Jewish Sanhedrin
about 30 AD**

Sanhedrin

History Prior to Time of Jesus

- 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**)

Sanhedrin

History Prior to Time of Jesus

- **End of the 2nd century BC:** Maccabees / Hasmoneans restored hereditary high priesthood (their own families) and made themselves kings
 - “the elders of the Jews,” the **Sanhedrin / Gerousia**, remained a potent force
- **63 BC:** Roman general Pompey conquered Jerusalem
 - kingship aspect of high priest terminated; but Rome left to the priesthood “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
 - **Sadducees**, with their strong base in the priests and elders dominated

Sanhedrin

Near the Time of Jesus' Death

- After formation of Roman **Province of Judea** in 6 AD: Sanhedrin retained administrative and judicial powers
- Membership:
 - Leader: “**High Priest,**” appointed by the Roman Governor
 - “**Chief priests:**” probably former high priests, and prominent members of families from which high priests were drawn

Sanhedrin

Near the Time of Jesus' Death

- “Elders:” wealthy or distinguished families
- “Scribes:” those with excellence in intelligence and learning
- Membership probably not assigned; rather the attendance of *representatives of particular groups* was expected when a Sanhedrin was “called.”
- Place where Sanhedrin met uncertain
 - Most likely: a place adjacent to rather than in the Temple

Sanhedrin

Near the Time of Jesus' Death

- 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

- Prevailing evidence on the Sanhedrin and the death penalty:
 - Jews could execute for certain clear religious offenses. For example:
 - Violating prohibitions for circulating in certain quarters of the Temple
 - Adultery (perhaps)
 - Beyond this, Jews had to hand cases over to the Romans
 - Romans sometimes cast a “blind eye” on an “illegal” execution by the Sanhedrin, but was not likely to do so in a case of notoriety

Jewish Before the Jewish Authorities

Mark

Mark

- 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
 - False witnesses claim 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

- High Priest annoyed by ineptitude of the witnesses and the silence of Jesus
 - Jesus' silence 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)

Mark

- To force an answer, 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

Mark

- 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
- Warns High Priest that he will see him:
“seated at the right hand of the Power,”
“coming with the clouds of heaven”

Mark

- 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 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)

Mark

- Two theological themes brought out in trial:
 - Jesus would both destroy the temple and “rebuild” it (as the Church)
 - Jesus is the Messiah / Son of God

Mark

- Meanwhile, Peter is also being questioned:
 - *First denial*: Pretense to maidservant not to understand her question
 - *Second denial*: Directly denies he is a disciple
 - *Third denial*: Swears an oath that he does not know Jesus and curses as he speaks
 - Many scholars believe Mark meant Peter was cursing Jesus
 - Many Christian readers of Mark would face martyrdom rather than deny or curse Jesus

Mark

- Peter remembers Jesus' prophecy 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 that at the very moment Jesus is being mocked by the Sanhedrin to prophecy, Jesus' prophecy about Peter is coming true

Jewish Before the Jewish Authorities

Matthew

Matthew

- Matthew's account of Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin very similar to Mark's
 - Matthew does identify the High Priest as **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)

Matthew

- 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
 - 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 to death

Matthew

- Jesus then abused by Sanhedrin: **“Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, saying, ‘Prophecy 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, the irony that Jesus’ prophecy about Peter comes true as he is mocked by the Sanhedrin to **“prophecy to us, you Messiah!”**

Matthew

- Matthew gives us a unique report on another disciple who betrays Jesus – **Judas** (Matt. 27:3-10)
- Logically, story is an awkward insertion: Sanhedrin who leads Jesus to Pilate is simultaneously portrayed 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 Ahitophel betrayed him; Ahitophel subsequently hanged himself (2 Sam 17:23)

Matthew

- Chief priests 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:
 - Judas himself buys the field
 - Dies from a type of "internal combustion" (as did an anti-God figure Antiochus Epiphanes in 2 Maccabees 9:7-10)

Matthew

- 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)

Jewish Before the Jewish Authorities

Luke

Luke

- Luke gives us a quite different picture of the night after Jesus' arrest than 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

Luke

- Peter follows to the same courtyard, and denies Jesus 3 times
 - Jesus is present in the same courtyard the whole time!
- At Peter's third denial, Jesus looks over at Peter (unique to Luke), causing Peter to remember Jesus' prophecy about him
 - **“And he went out and wept bitterly”** (NRSV Luke 22:62)

Luke

- Jesus is subsequently abused in the courtyard by “the men holding him”
- In the morning, Jesus interrogated by the collective leadership of the Sanhedrin, rather than just the High Priest
 - Questioned about his identity as Messiah and Son of God
 - 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
 - No witnesses
 - No sentence
- Perhaps interrogation preparatory to the one and only trial to 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

Jewish Before the Jewish Authorities

John

John

- 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”
 - As if 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

John

- In the meantime, Peter denies 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” also comes with Peter to the High Priest’s house
- This disciple is presumably the “the disciple whom Jesus loved” = “Beloved Disciple”

John

- The “Beloved Disciple” appears at all crucial scenes when another disciple is also present after Chapter 13 in John
 - Last Supper (13:23-26)
 - Jesus before Annas (18:15-16)
 - Crucifixion (19:26-27)
 - Empty Tomb (20:2-10)
- In each instance, he acts almost as a foil to Peter, always coming out better than Peter

John

- 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:
Jesus Before Pilate