
“In Consecutive Order”

“It seemed fitting . . . having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, . . . so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:3, 4).

Luke said of the gospel message, “It seemed fitting . . . to write it out for you *in consecutive order*” (Luke 1:3; emphasis mine). His words in the preface of his Gospel Account refer to the entire gospel story that he was compiling, but let us borrow his words and use them accommodatively. Let us apply them exclusively to the trials of Jesus. Only by combining the divine records of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John can we piece together the order of the events that preceded the handing down of the verdict for the execution of Jesus. Consequently, in answer to the question “What actually happened during the trials?” the following approximate list of events can be put together.

(1) Following Jesus’ arrest in the garden, He was taken directly to Annas. This high priest emeritus questioned Jesus about His disciples and His teaching (John 18:19–24). Jesus answered that He had spoken openly about what He had said and done. An officer standing nearby hit Jesus in the mouth. Annas must have been one of the leaders in this secret attempt to destroy Jesus. His leading part in the effort must have been one of the reasons that Jesus was first taken to Him.

(2) After drawing his conclusion about Jesus and about what should be done with Him, Annas sent Him to Caiaphas (John 18:24). In the early morning hours, this high priest gathered as many members of the Sanhedrin into his house as he could. In the examination, Caiaphas adjured Jesus to tell them whether or not He was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said that He was (Matthew 26:63, 64). At the

end of His interrogation by Caiaphas, Jesus was cruelly mocked (Mark 14:63–65). This was the first time Jesus was mocked during His trials.

(3) Out in the courtyard, occasionally sitting and sometimes moving around, Peter denied our Lord three times (Matthew 26:69–75). It was immediately after the final denial that Jesus was taken to meet with the Sanhedrin. That is when He turned and looked at Peter (Luke 22:61). The sight of Jesus’ face brought great repentance to Peter’s heart. Peter went out and wept bitterly.

(4) Caiaphas, after his meeting with Jesus, called an official assembly of the Sanhedrin at the break of day (see Mark 15:1). In this assembly the Sanhedrin formulated a case to present to Pilate.

(5) The chief priests and elders took Jesus to Pilate, the governor of Judea and Samaria. As the representative of Rome, Pilate would have to concur with the Sanhedrin’s decision before the crucifixion could take place (Matthew 27:1). He was already in trouble with Rome, so he needed to handle the Jews diplomatically. Jesus was ushered into the Praetorium. The Jews did not go into the Praetorium; to enter a Gentile’s house would leave them ceremonially defiled and unable to partake of the Passover later that evening (John 18:28).

(6) Pilate stepped out and heard their charges (John 18:29–32). Then, confused by what he had heard, he went back into the Praetorium and interrogated Jesus for himself (John 18:33–38). This was his first face-to-face meet-

ing with Jesus. Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" (v. 33). Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

(7) Pilate went back out to the Jews and declared that he had found no fault in Jesus. The chief priests were insistent that He must be crucified (John 18:38).

(8) Around this time, Judas took his betrayal money and threw it down in the sanctuary (Matthew 27:3-7). He had become convinced that Jesus would be condemned. Following his return of the thirty pieces of silver, Judas took his own life. Instead of repenting, he regretted.

(9) Not knowing what to do on his own, Pilate recalled that Herod was in town (Luke 23:6-11). He sent Jesus to him, thinking that he might have a solution to this dilemma. Jesus was silent before Herod. At the end of this interview, Jesus was again mocked (Luke 23:11a). This was the second mocking episode.

(10) Jesus was sent back to Pilate (Luke 23:11b). The situation was worsening by the minute. Pilate knew that he was facing a difficult situation.

(11) Pilate decided to use advantageously the custom of releasing a prisoner at the Passover. He put next to Jesus an insurrectionist named Barabbas, and he asked the Jews to decide which one he should release (Matthew 27:15-18). The crowd cried for Barabbas.

(12) Pilate sat on his judgment seat and prepared to make an announcement. Suddenly, through a messenger, he received a note from his wife. Sometime during the night, she had experienced a disturbing dream about this Man called Jesus. In light of this, she urged her husband to have nothing to do with Him (Matthew 27:19).

(13) Pilate requested water and a washbasin, and he washed his hands before the people. He was making a public statement that he was innocent of this Man's blood (Matthew 27:24).

(14) At this point, Pilate must have sent Jesus away to be scourged (Matthew 27:26; John 19:1). He may have thought that such an action would cause the Jews to relax and become non-violent, for they would think of the scourging as a preliminary to crucifixion. Pilate, however, must have been thinking that he could

use the scourging to get the people's sympathy and maybe have Jesus released. He was still laboring under the conviction that Jesus was innocent.

(15) After the scourging, Pilate placed Jesus before the mob. "Behold, the Man!" he said (John 19:5). The chief priests retorted, "Crucify Him!" (Matthew 27:23).

Pilate said, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him" (John 19:6). In reply, the chief priests said, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God" (John 19:7).

(16) This statement disturbed Pilate. He took Jesus out and interrogated Him again (John 19:9-11). He inquired, "Where are You from?" He further asked Him, "Are You the Son of God?" Jesus gave no answer.

(17) Pilate returned with Jesus and stood Him before the crowd, making an additional effort to release Him. The people cried, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar" (John 19:12). These words, to Pilate's ears, were charged with Roman repercussions. He could not think beyond them.

(18) Positioning himself on his judgment seat (at the place called Gabbatha) again, Pilate displayed Jesus before the people. Then the governor waved his hand and said, "Behold your King!" The crowd cried, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him! . . . We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:14, 15).

(19) Finally, Pilate gave up. Completely confused, bewildered, and defeated by the Jews, he delivered Jesus over to their will (John 19:16).

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"So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified" (John 19:16); "And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted. And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will" (Luke 23:24, 25); "Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified" (Mark 15:15); "Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified" (Matthew 27:26).