





Jesus, Followed by Peter, is Taken to the High Priest

Passage Overview

Matthew 26:57-58  | **Mark 14:53-54**  | **Luke 22:54**  | **John 18:13-16** 

These verses record Jesus being taken to the high priest after His arrest in Gethsemane. Peter follows at a distance, leading into his three denials. John adds that Jesus was first brought to Annas (the former high priest and father-in-law of Caiaphas) before being taken to Caiaphas, while Peter gains access to the courtyard with help from another disciple.

Gospel Comparison Chart

Gospel	Details
 Matthew 26:57-58	Jesus is taken to Caiaphas, the high priest, where scribes and elders are assembled. Peter follows at a distance, sits with guards to see the outcome.
 Mark 14:53-54	Jesus is led to the high priest; chief priests, elders, scribes gather. Peter follows at a distance into the courtyard, warming himself at the fire with guards.
 Luke 22:54	Jesus is seized and led to the high priest's house. Peter follows at a distance.
 John 18:13-16	Jesus is taken first to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas (high priest that year). John notes Caiaphas advised that it was better for one man to die for the people. Peter and another disciple follow; the other disciple (likely John) gains access to the courtyard, speaks to the servant girl at the gate, and lets Peter in.

Historical & Cultural Context

- **Annas and Caiaphas:** Annas served as high priest AD 6–15, removed by the Romans but still held influence. Five of his sons and his son-in-law Caiaphas held the office. The high priesthood was supposed to be for life under the Torah (Num 35:25), but Rome replaced priests for political control.
- **Jewish Trial Process:** A proper Sanhedrin trial was to be held in daylight (Mishnah Sanh. 4:1), but this one occurs at night, showing its illegality under Jewish law.
- **Peter Following “at a Distance”:** Indicates both courage (he didn’t run away) and fear (he didn’t stand with Jesus). This “distance” will mirror the spiritual distance that will soon widen with his denial.
- **Courtyard of the High Priest:** A large open area surrounded by rooms. Wealthy Jerusalem homes often had servants and guards keeping watch at the gate.

Greek Word Highlights

- **ἀκολούθει μακρόθεν** (*akolouthei makrothen*) – “followed at a distance” (Matt 26:58; Luke 22:54). The verb *akolouthēō* is the standard word for discipleship (“to follow”), here showing compromised commitment.
- **αὐλή** (*aulē*) – “courtyard,” literally meaning an enclosed open space within a building complex.
- **θερμαινόμενος** (*thermainomenos*) – “warming himself” (Mark 14:54; John 18:18). The same root gives us “thermos” and “thermal.”

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Theological Insights

1. **Jesus Before the High Priest** – This scene fulfills prophecy that Messiah would be rejected by the religious leaders (Ps 118:22; Isa 53:3).
2. **Two High Priests** – The existence of Annas and Caiaphas in the same scene shows the corruption of the high priesthood under Rome's control, contrasting with Jesus as the true eternal High Priest (Heb 4:14–15).
3. **Peter's Discipleship Under Pressure** – The physical distance between Peter and Jesus reflects the testing of his loyalty; discipleship often requires proximity in both presence and courage.
4. **John's Access** – Suggests that John's family had priestly connections (possibly supplying fish to the high priest's household), showing how God placed disciples strategically for eyewitness testimony.

Messianic & OT Connections

- **Psalm 118:22** – “The stone the builders rejected” → Religious leaders reject the Messiah.
- **Isaiah 53:3** – “He was despised and rejected by men... like one from whom people hide their faces.”
- **Zechariah 13:7** – “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered” → Peter's distance and fear are part of this scattering.
- **High Priest imagery in Leviticus** – Contrasted with Jesus, who enters the true Holy of Holies (Heb 9:11–12).

Reflection & Application

- **Faith Under Pressure**: Are we “following at a distance” when our faith costs us something?
- **Influence of Connections**: John's access to the courtyard reminds us God can use our relationships for kingdom purposes.
- **Courage vs. Caution**: Peter's mixed reaction shows that disciples can be both brave and weak in the same night.

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Here's a **full night timeline** for the events from Jesus' arrest through Peter's first denial, harmonizing **all four Gospels** and showing the sequence in detail.



Timeline: Arrest → Annas → Caiaphas → Peter's First Denial

Order	Event	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1	Jesus is arrested in Gethsemane	MT 26:47–56	MK 14:43–52	LK 22:47–53	JN 18:1–12
2	Jesus taken first to Annas	–	–	–	JN 18:13
3	Caiaphas is high priest that year (John's note)	–	–	–	JN 18:13b
4	Peter and another disciple follow Jesus	MT 26:57–58	MK 14:53–54	LK 22:54	JN 18:15
5	Other disciple (probably John) gains Peter entry into courtyard	–	–	–	JN 18:16
6	Jesus questioned by Annas	–	–	–	JN 18:19–23
7	Annas sends Jesus to Caiaphas	–	–	–	JN 18:24
8	Jesus before Caiaphas & partial Sanhedrin at night	MT 26:59–66	MK 14:55–64	–	–
9	Peter's first denial (at gate/door)	MT 26:69–70	MK 14:66–68	LK 22:55–57	JN 18:17
10	Servants and officers warm themselves by fire	–	–	–	JN 18:18



Notes on the Sequence

- **John alone** records the stop at **Annas** before Jesus is sent to **Caiaphas**, which explains why the Synoptics jump straight to Caiaphas' trial.
- Peter's first denial **occurs while Jesus is still inside** being questioned—first by Annas (John) and then Caiaphas (Synoptics).