

## Study Guide

Series: The Final Hours of Jesus' Life  
The Courtyard

This week we'll study the trial of Jesus by the Sanhedrin and Peter's denial of Jesus, not simply from Mark's Gospel, but from the other Gospels as well. You'll have a chance to notice the similarities, but also the differences in the different Gospel accounts of the events that took place between midnight and 6:00 am on the day Jesus was crucified. Ask what the differences teach us and how they round out the story; but don't simply focus on the differences. Each day reflect upon the meaning of each part of the story: The Sanhedrin's condemnation, Jesus' testimony about himself, and Peter's denial of Christ.

**Monday** – Take a piece of notepaper, turn it sideways and make four three inch columns. At the top of each column write the name of a different Gospel: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. As you read each day in the study guide, note the unique characteristics or the insights you have gained from reading that particular Gospel's account of the trial of Jesus by the Sanhedrin and Peter's denial of Christ. You will find there are many similarities, but also a few differences. Let's begin with Matthew's account. *Read Matthew 26:57-75.* Matthew's account comes closest in agreement with Mark's account. Look over your notes from Sunday's sermon – what was the Sanhedrin Syndrome? How are we modern people like the Jewish Sanhedrin? What does it take for evil to triumph? Imagine that you were sitting watching the events of the Sanhedrin – what do you think it would have been like to have been in that room? Why did they beat and spit upon Jesus? How does the account of Peter's denial make you feel? Can you identify with Peter?

**Tuesday** – Using your notepaper from yesterday, be sure to include the details of Mark's account of the trial and Peter's denial, noting the differences. *Read Mark 14:53-72.* Why did they blindfold Jesus as they were preparing to strike him? Look at the response of Jesus when he was on the "witness stand" – what did his words in verse 62 mean? Look over your sermon notes to recall the significance of his testimonial. Jesus draws from Exodus 3:14, Psalm 110 and Daniel 7:13 and following. Look up these scriptures and see if you can tell why Jesus responded to the high priest by making allusions to these passages. What does Jesus' testimony tell us about how he understood his ministry?

**Wednesday** – Write down on your notepaper the similarities and differences between Luke's account of the trial before the Sanhedrin and Mark and Matthew's accounts. *Read Luke 22:54-71.* How much courage did it take for Peter to come into the courtyard with the guards who had arrested Jesus? If Jesus was arrested about midnight and finally arrived at the High Priest's home by 1:00 am, try to imagine the time these various things take place. What hints do you have that help you set a time for this? Notice that Luke tells us Jesus looked at Peter from the place he was being held when Peter denied Jesus the third time. Imagine this look across the courtyard. How do you see this in your mind's eye? What other differences do you see between this account and Matthew and Mark's accounts? Reflecting upon your notes from Sunday's sermon, why did the Early Church recount Peter's story of his denial of Jesus?

**Thursday** – Today we turn to John’s account of the arrest and denial. Again, note the similarities and differences between the four Gospel accounts of this event. *Read John 18:12-27*. John does not mention the entire Sanhedrin – he may assume the reader knows about this body meeting to try Jesus. Instead, he mentions two trials – one before the former high priest, Annas and a second before the sitting high priest, Caiphas. Put all of this information together from your study to get a harmonized or comprehensive picture of what happened. Reflect again upon the reasons two high priests (first century Popes) called for Jesus’ death. How do you envision the tone of Jesus when he speaks here? What does Peter’s denial mean to you?

**Friday** – Let’s see how the story of Peter’s denial of Jesus is resolved. *Read John 21:15-19*. This takes place after the resurrection. How many times does Jesus ask about Peter’s love? What is the significance of this? What did this story mean to Peter? To you?