

PLOT TO KILL JESUS

Matthew 26:1–5

THE PASSION NARRATIVE (MATTHEW 26–28)

- this last section of Matthew is called the Passion Narrative
- it describes the death and resurrection of Jesus—the purpose and climax of his ministry
- no public teaching occurs in this section: Jesus' public teaching ministry ends with the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24–25)
- each of the five discourses in Matthew ends with a statement that Jesus had finished speaking (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1)

JESUS PROPHESES HIS CRUCIFIXION (MATTHEW 26:1–2)

- this is the fourth and final prediction of his death—and it will take place within two days (16:21; 17:22–23; 20:17–19; 26:2)
- he has been predicting his death for six months, but now reveals for the first time he will be crucified on the Passover
- the prediction was made on the Mount of Olives where Jesus and his disciples have been spending the night (Luke 21:37–38)
 - it was probably made after sunset on Tuesday (beginning of Wednesday for Jews)
 - the Feast of Passover began on Thursday evening (beginning of Friday for Jews)
 - all adult male Jews living within 15 miles of Jerusalem must come to the Passover
- "delivered up" (*paradidomi*) occurs 15 times in the Passion Narrative (26:2, 15–16, 21, 23–25, 45–46, 48; 27:2–4, 18, 26)

PLOT OF THE CHIEF PRIESTS, SCRIBES, AND ELDERS TO ARREST AND KILL JESUS (MATTHEW 26:3–4)

- the plot to arrest and kill Jesus also took place on Tuesday
- this meeting is the beginning of the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy about being crucified on the Passover (26:2)
- this meeting is also a partial fulfillment of Psalm 2:2: "rulers take counsel together...against His anointed" (cf. Acts 4:25–28)
 - it is not a formal meeting of the Sanhedrin but a gathering of some of its leaders in the residence of Caiaphas
- the entire Sanhedrin was represented—the high priest, chief priests, elders, and scribes (Matt 26:3; Mark 14:1; Luke 22:2)
 - Caiaphas was appointed high priest by Rome in A.D. 18 and continued until A.D. 36
- they have been plotting to kill Jesus for some time (imperfect tense of *zeteo* 'were seeking' in Mark and Luke)
- they have not yet figured out a way to arrest Jesus (after several attempts, cf. John 7:32, 45–47; Matt 21:46)
- they were enraged by recent events: the raising of Lazarus (John 12:9–11), triumphal entry (Matt 21:1–11), cleansing of the Temple (21:12–16), parables directed against them (21:28–22:14), and woes pronounced on the scribes and Pharisees (23:1–39)
- they wanted to seize him by deceit, trickery, or treachery—*dolos* is a bait for fish and by extension any means of enticing prey

FEAR OF A RIOT (MATTHEW 26:5)

- the festival lasted for 8 days: the Passover and seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 14–21)
 - the population of Jerusalem swelled from about 50,000 to 250,000 during the Passover
- they decided not to try to arrest Jesus until after the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. Mark 14:2)
- it was a time of intense nationalistic feeling (freedom from slavery in Egypt plus resentment of Roman occupation)
- to keep the peace Roman troops were sent to Jerusalem and quartered in the Antonia Fortress overlooking the Temple
- the arrest of Jesus may stir up the crowds to riot in protest, since many friends of Jesus came to Jerusalem for the Feast
- Judas gave the Jewish leaders the opportunity they were looking for—a way to seize Jesus by deceit and treachery
 - they changed their plan, decided to take the risk, and moved up their timetable to arrest Jesus by a week
 - Jesus must die on the Passover to fulfill the typology of the Passover Lamb
- God used the betrayal of Judas to bring about the death of the Lamb on the Passover
 - they who would avoid Rome's wrath will incur God's wrath