



Chapter 11

WHERE WAS THE SANHEDRIN LOCATED?

The New Testament contains geographical information that provides us with a fascinating account of what *really* happened on the day of Jesus' crucifixion. This is especially true when we combine it with Jewish records concerning the Temple in the first century. They provide us with a *new* understanding of the history of that day that is truly eye-opening. The actual historical scenario has been obscured because most observers have followed the commonly accepted account of Jesus' crucifixion that has prevailed since the time of Constantine. What needs to be done is to re-think the historical and geographical evidences that are given to us in the early documents. We especially need to know *where* the House of Caiaphas was located in which Jesus underwent his preliminary examination and *where* the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Supreme Court) was situated in which he was condemned. Also we should know *where* Pilate finally pronounced his judgment to have him crucified. When these points are properly understood, the events as shown by the New Testament give a profound historical and doctrinal significance to the role of Jesus in fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah's Suffering Servant. It also shows even more poignantly how

he became the *literal* (as well as the *symbolic*) sin-bearer for Israel and the world as reckoned by the apostles and early Christians.

Let us look at the geographical evidences that can help us locate these significant sites. Our quest should start with the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and proceed until he was executed on the tree at Golgotha. The first thing we should realize is that Jesus was arrested about midnight by both Roman and Jewish soldiers (and both groups are distinguished in John 18:12). He was led first to Annas who is designated a chief priest and who no doubt was the deputy (or *sagan* in Hebrew) to the actual High Priest who was Caiaphas. Edersheim in his *Life and Times* (vol.II,p.547) notes that there is no further mention of Roman troops (or police) after Jesus was placed in the hands of Annas. Not until Jesus was handed over to Pilate for final judgment do we again meet with Romans. There is a significant reason why Roman Gentiles had nothing to do with any affairs involving Annas, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. The fact is, the place where their homes and chamber hall were located did not permit Gentiles to be within its precincts (and the Roman authorities upheld the restriction). We will soon understand why Romans could not be in those areas.

Annas and Caiaphas lived at the time in different sections of the same house as most commentators have believed because a single courtyard served them both (compare John 18:15-18 which deals with Annas and Matthew 26:57,58 which mentions Caiaphas in association with the same courtyard). This gives credence to the belief that both priests were then in some kind of official capacity that required them to be near each other. Indeed, it was then the Passover season and both the High Priest and his deputy would have needed to be in residence close to one another. Jesus along with John were then led into the courtyard (Greek: *aule*) of the residence of Annas and Caiaphas. This is also called the *house* or *home* (Greek: *oikos*) of the High Priest (Luke 22:54). Peter, however, was only able to stand near the door (and later in the

vestibule) of the courtyard where he warmed himself with others because it was cold. After a preliminary examination, Annas handed Jesus over to Caiaphas (John 18:12-18).

The Official Sanhedrin (the Supreme Court) Judged Jesus

At this time in the activities of the court, a large number of members of the Sanhedrin (the Supreme Court of the nation) began to arrive at the residence of Caiaphas (Matthew 26:59; Mark 14:55) and there they began to question Jesus about what they considered to be his unlawful activities. But when it became daylight, Luke said that the whole group then went to the building in which the Sanhedrin normally held their official trials and judgments (Luke 22:66). Luke makes a special point of informing his readers that this removal of the High Priest, the chief priests, the scribes and elders from the house (*oikos*) and courtyard (*aule*) of the High Priest into the official Chamber of the Sanhedrin *was after daylight* because the law required that trials and judgments involving capital crimes had to take place within the Chamber of the Sanhedrin itself, and within the hours of daylight (*Sanhedrin* 4:1).

Interestingly (and most importantly), Caiaphas and the members of the Sanhedrin only had to walk fewer than 50 yards from the High Priest's house (*oikos* and/or *aule*), which would have taken no more than two or three minutes, in order for them to enter the official Chamber of the Sanhedrin. There is no doubt that this was the case, because (in the time of Jesus) the Chamber of the Sanhedrin was situated directly inside the Temple itself. It was located at what was known as the Chamber of Hewn Stones which was about 40 yards southeast of the entrance to the Holy Place where the curtain was hanging that tore in two at the time of Jesus' death. We are told that half of the Sanhedrin Hall was in the Court of the Israelites and half in the Court of the Priests (*Middoth* 5:1; *Sanhedrin* 11:2; *Yoma* 25a).

The particular *house* (*oikos*) and *courtyard* (*aule*) of the High

Priest were also located in the Temple complex and adjacent to the Chamber of Hewn Stones as one would expect for the High Priest (who was the President of the Sanhedrin and the political and religious head of the nation underneath the Romans). In the Mishnah (the earliest part of the Talmud), it states that the residence of the High Priest was at or near the “Wood Chamber” located west of the Chamber of Hewn Stones (*Mid.* 5:4) and next to the House of Abtinias (sometimes spelled Avtinias) where the incense was prepared for the Temple services. It was in the Upper Chamber of this “Temple House” that it is believed the House of the High Priest was located when he lived in his official residence upon the Temple Mount (*Ency. Judaica*, vol.III.991). These “Houses” of the priests abutting to the Chamber of Hewn Stones (the Sanhedrin) were built on the second story around and above a courtyard of columns below. Remarkably, the New Testament states specifically that Jesus was taken into the Upper Chamber of the High Priest’s house while Peter had to stay below near the vestibule of the courtyard (Mark 14:66). This answers precisely to the description of the second story residences for the High Priest (and other priestly dignitaries) which the Mishnah shows were supported by columns over a courtyard. These “Houses” were located just to the west and abutting to the Chamber of Hewn Stones (*Tam.* 1:1). Since these quarters of the High Priests were within the Temple, this explains why the Roman soldiers are no longer mentioned until Jesus met Pilate. Such soldiers, being Gentiles, were forbidden entry into the Temple enclosure itself where the High Priest lived during the festival periods. All Gentiles were banned from the Temple precincts

The Houses of the High Priest

The High Priest actually had more than one residence in Jerusalem. While it can be reasonably reckoned that he had a sumptuous home in the aristocratic region of Jerusalem on the southwest hill, he also had at least two other residences within the Temple itself in which he had to live at certain times of the year or when

special sacrifices were offered. For example, when the High Priest was required to offer the Red Heifer, he had to precede the sacrifice by a stay of seven days in what was called the “House of Stone” at the northeastern corner of the Temple building (*Parah* 3:1). And also before the Day of Atonement, he had to reside seven days in his “Temple House” near the Chamber of the Hewn Stones (of which we have been speaking above) (*Yoma* 1:1). Look what the Mishnah says about this particular event.

“Seven days before the Day of Atonement the High Priest was taken apart *from his own house* [that is, his regular home on the southwest hill] unto the Counselor’s Chamber and another priest was made ready in his stead lest aught should befall him to render him ineligible.”

This is very revealing information for our subject at hand. Note that it was customary at special times to have a *second* priest ready in case the High Priest was in some way unable to perform the ceremonies. And at the time of Jesus’ trial, there was both Annas and Caiaphas being called “High Priests” and they were housed in the same residential area in the *house (oikos)* of the High Priest. This was not his regular house (or palace) on the southwest hill, but Caiaphas had retired from that house into his special house on the Temple Mount. The Mishnah called this *house* the Counselor’s Chamber. It was designated with this title because the “Counselor” was the President of the Sanhedrin (who was the High Priest). This is why his Chamber (or *house*) was directly adjacent to the Chamber of Hewn Stones, the official building for sessions of the Sanhedrin. Would it not appear normal for the Chief Justice (President) of the Sanhedrin to have an official residence abutting to the Sanhedrin itself? Of course. And this was the case in the time of Jesus.

In addition to his normal *house* (or palace) on the southwest hill, it was necessary for the High Priest to have this *home* or official *house* within the Temple enclosure in order to perform certain ceremonies demanded in the Mosaic law. Such a separate residence

was required when each High Priest was consecrated. It was demanded in the Law that he stay seven days within the Temple and near the Holy Place (Leviticus 8:33). There were other times when this was necessary. Josephus (who himself was a priest) stated that the High Priest presided in the Temple over the ceremonies of the Sabbath, the new moons, “and on any national festival or annual assemblage of all the people” (*War* V.230). Since the trial of Jesus took place at the time of Passover, there can be no doubt that Caiaphas (along with his deputy Annas) were then away from their ordinary homes (or *houses*) and they were then resident in the Upper Chambers within the Temple adjacent to the Chamber of Hewn Stones where the Sanhedrin met. As a matter of fact, we have New Testament evidence that the “House of Caiaphas” at the time of Jesus’ trial was his “Temple House” and *not* his regular one on the southwest hill. Note that when false witnesses accused Jesus at Caiaphas’ House they said: “We heard him say *I will throw down THIS Temple* that was made with hands and in three days I will build another not made with hands” (Mark 14:58). It is important to realize that they did not say “*the* Temple,” as though it was situated at a distance from them. They referred to it as “*this* Temple,” which means they were then situated within the Temple complex itself.

This is New Testament evidence that the “House of Caiaphas” at the time of Jesus’ trial was not his ordinary residence, but it was his “House” within the Temple enclosure. It is important to realize that the *universal* testimony of early Jewish historical sources (from the start of the second to the end of the fifth centuries) shows that the Chamber of Hewn Stones in the year A.D.30 was the official seat of the Sanhedrin, and that it was located in the Temple about 40 yards southeast of the entrance to the Holy Place.

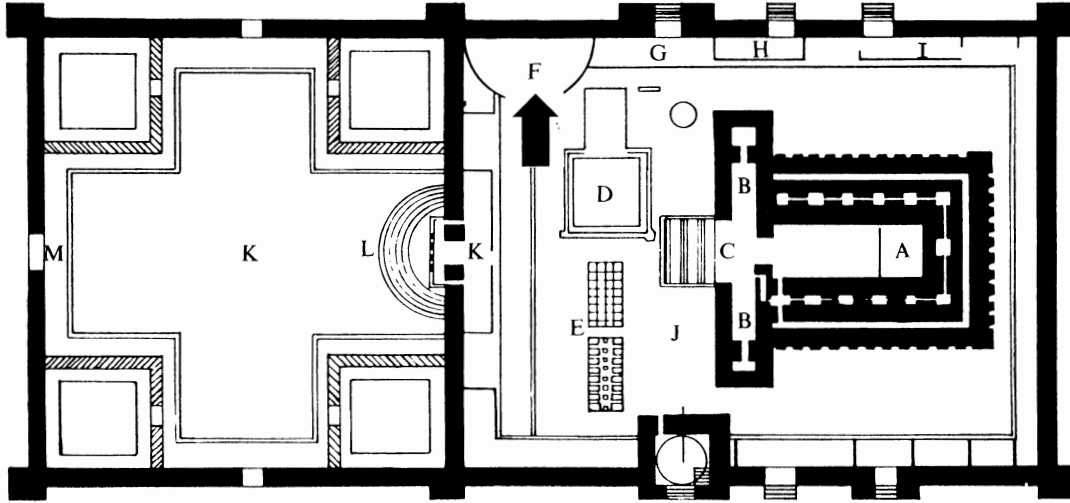
The Sanhedrin Met in the Temple

We are told, however, that in the year that Jesus was crucified (A.D.30), the Sanhedrin ceased holding its sessions in the official

Chamber of Hewn Stones. They were banished to an insignificant section of the Temple a little farther to the east called “the Trading Place.” It is not recorded in the early Jewish records why the Sanhedrin had to move from their palatial quarters in the Chamber of Hewn Stones (which must have been most beautiful and majestic) into a part of the Temple with much lesser esteem. But this did not end the matter. For some reason they did not remain long even at “the Trading Place,” because Josephus tells us that just before the Jewish/Roman War of A.D.66 to 70, the Sanhedrin was then meeting outside the Temple area and within a common part of the city of Jerusalem. This was at a gymnasium inside the city of Jerusalem just to the west of the Temple next to a building called the Xystus (*War* V.144; comp. *War* II.344). And then, after Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in A.D.70, the Sanhedrin moved to a city called Jamnia (or Jabneh) about 30 miles west of Jerusalem.

These three moves of the Sanhedrin from the Chamber of Hewn Stones near the Holy Place in the Temple, to “the Trading Place,” and then to near the Xystus in the city of Jerusalem are mentioned in the Jewish Talmud (they also record seven additional moves of the Sanhedrin up to about A.D.429 when the Sanhedrin was abolished by the Romans). Note first a reference in *Shabbath* 15a followed by another in *Rosh ha-Shanah* 31a,b.

“Forty years before the destruction of the Temple [in A.D.30], the Sanhedrin was banished (from the Chamber of Hewn Stones) and sat in the trading-station (on the Temple Mount).” “The Sanhedrin suffered ten removals: from the Chamber of Hewn Stones to the trading-station, from the trading station to (the city of) Jerusalem [next to the Xystus on the western side of the Temple], from Jerusalem to Jabneh [after the destruction of Jerusalem], from Jabneh to Usha [in Galilee], from Usha back to Jabneh, then back to Usha, after that to Shaphraam, from Shaphraam to Beth Shearim, from Beth Shearim to Sepphoris, from Sepphoris to Tiberias” (the comments in brackets are mine, inside parentheses are translators).



The Temple at the time of Christ. A) Holy of Holies, B) Outer Holy Place, C) Outer Curtain, D) Altar of Burnt Offering, E) Slaughter Areas, F) Chamber of Hewn Stone (Sanhedrin Hall), G) Counsellor's Chamber, H) House of Abtinias, I) Chamber of Wood, J) Court of Priests, K) Court of Israel, L) Steps to Nicanor Gate, M) Eastern Gate. Diagram by Norman Tenedora.

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This is very important historical information because it indicates that at the time of the trial of Jesus the Sanhedrin was meeting in the Chamber of Hewn Stones on the Temple Mount. This must be the case because the New Testament tells us that the courtyard (*aule*) and house (*oikos*) of the High Priest were not far away from the Sanhedrin and Jewish documents show that the High Priest would have been in his *house* on the Temple mount next to the Chamber of Hewn Stones at that time of Passover. The festival seasons required the High Priest to be in his “Temple House.”

The Sanhedrin Banished From the Chamber of Hewn Stones

Something, however, caused the Sanhedrin to be banished (as the Talmud tells us) from the Chamber of Hewn Stones to “the Trading Place.” This happened in A.D.30. We are not told in what day or month that this “banishment” took place. Whatever the case, when Stephen (the first Christian martyr) was brought before the Sanhedrin for trial, we find that they were still meeting in a building that was still a part of the Temple. The Book of Acts tells us that Stephen was led “into the Sanhedrin” (Acts 6:12). While there, false witnesses were brought in who said: “This man does not stop speaking against *THIS Holy Place* and against the law. For example, we have heard him say that this Jesus the Nazarene will throw down *THIS Place* and change the customs that Moses handed down to us” (Acts 6:13,14). Clearly, these statements show that the accusers of Stephen, who were then within the official chambers of the Sanhedrin, were still located in *THIS Holy Place* [the Temple complex itself]. They did not say, simply, “the Temple,” as one would expect if they were then situated somewhere away from the Temple. The truth is, they were still meeting within the Temple complex when Stephen was tried before the Sanhedrin.

What we now need to ask is: What would have caused the Sanhedrin to abandon the official (and quite palatial) Chamber of Hewn Stones very near the Holy Place itself to meet in an insignif-

icant area on the Temple Mount called “the Trading Place”? The Talmud relates it was because of a “banishment.” But who would have “banished” them from their normal place for meeting in A.D.30? There would have been no reason for the Romans to have demanded such a move because they cared little for what the Jews did in a religious sense as long as they remained obedient to Rome and paid their taxes. It could hardly have been the Roman government that made them transfer their Sanhedrin a few yards east of the Chamber of Hewn Stones.

It may be explained by something else that happened in the same year. All right, then, what happened in A.D.30 that the Jewish authorities had to move the Sanhedrin to this eastern region of the Temple? There is a Jewish record that the doors in back of the huge curtain in front of the Holy Place *opened of their own accord* sometime during the year A.D.30. Note what the account relates:

“Forty years before the Temple was destroyed [in A.D.30]...the gates of the Hekel [the Holy Place] opened by themselves, until Rabbi Yohanan B. Zakkai rebuked them [the gates] saying: Hekel, Hekel, why alarmist thou us? We know that thou art destined to be destroyed. For of thee hath prophesied Zechariah ben Iddo [Zech.11:1]: Open thy doors, O Lebanon, and the fire shall eat thy cedars” (Yoma 39b).

Some two days before Jesus was crucified, he told his disciples that Jerusalem and the Temple would soon be destroyed. And in the very year that Jesus said this, Rabbi Yohanan B. Zakkai was commenting on the mysterious opening of the doors behind the curtain of the Holy Place. Edersheim (in his *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*) was of the opinion that the opening of these Temple doors was in some way associated with the tearing of the curtain which happened at the precise time of Jesus’ death (vol.II, pp.610,611). This would be a logical conclusion because the doors were positioned directly in back of the curtain itself. For the tearing of the curtain to be a symbolic gesture that God the Father had now “destroyed” the real barrier into the Holy of Holies itself, then the

symbol would have been meaningless had the doors behind the curtain remained closed. In fact, for the intended symbol to have had any relevance whatever, the two events would have had to occur simultaneously.

So spectacular would both events have been (the tearing of the curtain and the opening of the doors) that it would have been most unusual for such circumstances to have happened at different times in the same year. Only a simultaneous occurrence makes any sense at all (as Edersheim observed).

The Tearing of the Temple Curtain

But how did the doors of the Holy Place open? As explained in chapter seven of this book, a Jewish Christian work of the early second century called "The Gospel of the Nazaraeans" said that the large stone lintel which supported the curtain (which no doubt had the inner doors attached to it for stability) split in two at the same time as the curtain (*cf.* Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *The New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. I, pp.150,153). There is no reason to deny the possibility that the collapse of this lintel (which was an enormous stone at least 30 feet long and weighing around 30 tons) was the "natural cause" of the curtain rending in two. The fact that the curtain was severed from the top to the bottom also suggests that it was the force of the falling lintel (which happened at the exact time of a great earthquake) that caused the curtain of the Holy Place to tear in two.

But what has this to do with the Sanhedrin having to abandon the Chamber of Hewn Stones in which they normally met? It has very much to do with it. If an earthquake of the magnitude capable of breaking the stone lintel at the top of the entrance to the Holy Place was occurring at the exact time of Jesus' death, then what would such an earthquake have done to the Chamber of Hewn Stones (a vaulted structure with columns) no more than 40 yards away from where the stone lintel fell and the curtain tore in two?

The Destruction of the Chamber of Hewn Stones

There is every reason to believe that the Chamber of Hewn Stones was so damaged in the same earthquake that it became structurally unsafe from that time forward. Something like this had to have happened because the Sanhedrin would not have left this majestic chamber (to take up residence in the insignificant “Trading Place”) unless something approaching this explanation took place. If this is actually what happened (and I have no doubt that it did), we then have a most remarkable witness that God the Father engineered every action happening on the day of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion. It means that the judgment made by the official Sanhedrin against Jesus within the Chamber of Hewn Stones *was THE LAST JUDGMENT* ever given by the official Sanhedrin in their majestic chambers within the Temple. It would show that God the Father demonstrated by the earthquake at Jesus’ death that the *sentence* of the Sanhedrin against Jesus *would be the last judgment* it would ever make in that authorized place.

It should be remembered, that in normal circumstances it was felt proper that *all* judgments of God in the Jerusalem area had to take place “in the presence of God.” This concept was explained in chapter two of this book. That is one of the main reasons why the Sanhedrin was placed in the Temple directly east (and slightly south) of the entrance to the Holy Place. Since the entrances to the Holy Place and the inner Holy of Holies were on the *east*, it was reasoned that God faced *eastward* to see all events which were happening in “His House” (the Temple itself).

This is why the sacrifices were performed at the *eastern* entrance to the Holy Place, and even the remote Red Heifer sacrifice also was killed *east* (and in “*sight*” of God) at the summit of the Mount of Olives. This is the reason capital judgments made in the Sanhedrin were rendered (ideally) on the *east* side of the Temple, and why criminals condemned to die were executed near the top of the Mount of Olives in order for them to be a “sacrifice

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of atonement” for themselves “in the presence of God.” Thus, Jesus was judged and executed “in the presence of God” so that the Old Testament requirements could be satisfied. In both his judgment and his execution, the action was carried out by the Sanhedrin east of the Holy Place in the Temple.

But the sentence of the Sanhedrin did not end the matter. There was still the Roman authorities that had to be consulted. It was then necessary to take Jesus to Pilate, the Roman representative, for his approval of the judgment. In what region of Jerusalem was Pilate at the time? Was he then in the Palace that Herod built on the southwestern hill or was he among the majority of his troops which would have been at the fortress called the Antonia situated just outside the northwestern angle of the Temple enclosure? The Fortress of Antonia (named after Mark Antony by Herod) has by far the best credentials. There are good reasons to believe that it was to *this* Praetorium that Jesus was brought to be finally judged by Pilate.

It appears that there were actually *two* Praetoriums in Jerusalem (the Jewish capital of the region) as there were in Caesarea on the coast (the Roman capital of the region). Note Acts 23:35 where we read that the Jews had their own Praetorium (Herod’s judgment hall) which was different from the Roman Imperial Praetorium. The same type of judicial arrangement must have been in existence in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, Jesus must have been taken to the Roman Imperial Praetorium at Fort Antonia, rather than the former Herod’s Praetorium located at Herod’s palace which would have been more parochial in authority.

The Roman Praetorium at Jerusalem was Located at Fort Antonia

This can be shown in several ways. It would have been unwise for any Roman commander to be anywhere else but the Antonia next to the Temple itself when there were thousands upon thousands of Jews assembling in the Temple for their national holy peri-

ods. While it was normal for Roman leaders to live in Herod's Palace on the southwest hill (as shown by Josephus in *War* II.325-329), at the times of the Jewish annual festivals it was customary for the Roman commander to take up residence with his main body of troops at the Antonia adjacent to the Temple. This is what Cumanus, the commander of Judaea who ruled in the middle of the first century, did at the time of Passover (*War* II.223-227).

There can hardly be a doubt that Pilate (at the time of Jesus) did the same thing. It should be noted that Pilate's wife sent him a message about a dream she had. This would have been unnecessary had Pilate been with his wife that night (Matthew 27:19). Pilate was clearly away from his ordinary living quarters at the time. At that Passover season he was where "the whole army" was stationed (Matthew 27:27). This is a description that favors the Antonia. Note also that the Jews did not want to enter into the Praetorium where Pilate was in fear of becoming impure and unfit to take the Passover (John 18:28). This fear of impurity would fit the Antonia far more than Herod's Palace. The truth is, the Antonia was really a "city" in itself and it was a Gentile one located right in the midst of Jerusalem. The only restriction against taking the Passover for Jews was to come in contact with a dead body (Numbers 9:6-12). Unless there was someone who had recently died (and was lying in state) in Herod's Palace, there would have been no restriction whatever to prevent the Jews from eating the Passover that they could not have overcome by simply washing themselves before sundown (Edersheim, *Life and Times*, vol.II, pp.556,557). But the Antonia was a very different place. It was virtually a large "Gentile town." Such places would ordinarily have had some dead bodies within them who were either waiting to be buried or cremated. There would also have been chambers for retaining the remains of dead soldiers (who died in line of duty) awaiting transport back to their home areas for interment. For any Jew to enter the central area of this "Gentile city" called the Antonia would have rendered the person unclean for at least a seven day period. Thus, again, the region

of the Antonia fits far better the description of the Praetorium in which Jesus was brought before Pilate rather than the Palace of Herod located on the southwest hill.

This belief is further strengthened by the information provided in this chapter, because all of the events of Jesus' interrogation and trial at the House of Annas and Caiaphas and in the Chambers of the Sanhedrin took place on the Temple Mount about 300 yards from the Antonia. For Pilate to have been at his ordinary residence on the southwestern hill would have involved a great deal of extended walking (and back-tracking) on the part of Jesus and the Sanhedrin members. But going the short distance from the Temple to the Antonia makes perfectly good sense. See the excellent account by Finegan, *The Archeology of the New Testament*, pp.156,157 which shows that Pilate was then at the Antonia and VanElderen's comprehensive article in the new *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (vol.III, p.929).

Jesus Was Judged and Convicted on the Temple Mount

When it is realized that the proceedings against Jesus by the Sanhedrin occurred on the Temple Mount and that Pilate judged him at the adjacent area called the Antonia, it gives a great deal of credence to the belief that all of the deliberations that took place that day were within the Law of Moses. Some commentators have thought the inquisition and trial of Jesus were illegal because they believe that the "House of Caiaphas" in which Jesus was interrogated was on the southwestern hill. True enough, had this been the case, then the proceedings against Jesus would have to be reckoned illegal. But this is not what happened. Since it was the Passover, the gates of the Temple were opened at midnight (Josephus, *Antiquities* XVIII.29; Mishnah *Yoma* 1:8) and it was proper for people to enter the Temple after that time. And with the sentence of Jesus *being after sunrise* (a definite requirement for legality and it occurred within the official Chamber of the Sanhedrin), then it can be shown that everything that happened to Jesus that day was within the Law

of Moses. The fact that some witnesses perjured themselves is of no consequence to the issue because even in legal trials (that result in false convictions because of perjury) it cannot be said that the trials themselves were illegal.

There is little doubt that people will continue to look at the details of Jesus' interrogation, his formal trial and sentence and find some fault (in their own minds) here and there. But such nit-picking can be eliminated if one will simply look at the actions of Pilate. The apostle John makes it clear that Pilate tried his best to prevent the execution of Jesus (at least at the time the Sanhedrin brought Jesus to him). Had Pilate found the slightest illegality in the manner of his trial even from the Jewish point of view (and it is only reasonable that Pilate had a bevy of lawyers around him trained in Jewish jurisprudence), he would have dismissed their charges against Jesus or demanded that they hold another trial under *legal* circumstances.

The accounts in the Gospels, however, make it clear that no such illegality was found by Pilate or his advisors. He then washed his hands of the whole affair and let them kill him according to the Jewish laws (John 18:31). The truth is, Jesus was not tried or executed to satisfy Roman laws because even Rome allowed a formal court hearing (and one scheduled on the court calendar) in which the defendant would be given time to produce witnesses for his defense. No such trial under the authority of Rome was given to Jesus. All Pilate did (as the Roman commander) was to give permission to the Sanhedrin to carry out *their* judgments upon Jesus because they did not have the power to execute criminals at the time (John 18:31).

But what about the fact that Jesus was crucified? Was that not a Roman means of execution? Yes, but not exclusively. Recall that the Gospels show that it was the inhabitants of Jerusalem who demanded of Pilate that he "crucify him" (John 19:6,15). The crucifixion and his death were to satisfy Jewish laws (in Pilate's opin-

ion), not those of Rome. And, to be explained in chapter twenty-two of this book, the *Temple Scroll* (found among the Dead Sea Scrolls) shows that it was then a Jewish practice to hang (or nail) a person to a tree and then have him stoned to death. The truth is, Pilate (and the Empire of Rome that he represented) washed their hands of the whole affair (Matthew 27:24). The trial, sentence and execution of Jesus was by Jewish laws (the Law of Moses). The only thing involving Pilate (and Rome) was to allow them to do it. As Pilate said: "Take you him, and judge him according to *your* law" (John 18:31).

The Execution of Jesus Was Legal

It was absolutely essential that Jesus was tried and convicted in a legal manner in order to fulfill all the laws and types of the Old Testament. This is a matter of profound theological importance. Look at it for a moment. Had Jesus' death not been legal, then what he did for Christians and the world by dying for their sins (as the New Testament attests that he did) would have to be put aside as not legally proper. In no way would Peter or Paul have accepted such a proposition. If his death were not legal, then his atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world would also not be legal. But when Jesus died on the tree of crucifixion, *all legal requirements* of the Law of Moses had been met.

In the next chapter we will observe that there were two places that the Sanhedrin met in Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. The main region was at the Chamber of Hewn Stones (as I have shown in this chapter), but there was another region where the full body of the Sanhedrin would meet under special circumstances. That was at a place on the Mount of Olives called Bethphage. This was the village where Jesus obtained the donkey to make his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We now know that this village was a small walled town of priests situated just to the east of the Miphkad Altar. There was a significant reason why Jesus got the donkey for his triumphal entry at this priestly town. It was so important in the time of Jesus

that the Jewish authorities considered it to be a part of the city of Jerusalem in a legal sense. It was also where the Sanhedrin would meet for certain judicial affairs that could not be held in the Chamber of Hewn Stones on the Temple mount. What we now know is that Jesus was judged and convicted by the Sanhedrin on the Temple Mount, but he was officially excommunicated from Israelite society and sentenced to die at a final judgment held at the Court of the Sanhedrin located at Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. The next chapter will explain.