

## The Trial of Jesus

<u>Characters</u>	<u>Parts</u>	<u>Lines</u>
Jesus	12	51
Caiaphas	44	95
Annas	16	40
Nicodemus	3	8
Rabbi Joseph	3	8
Rabbi Benjamin	5	9
Rabbi Simon	9	26
Rabbi Mordecai	7	14
All Rabbi Speaking	2	4
Spy	8	11
Guard One	4	7
Guard Two	4	12
Jonas	5	10
Samuel	3	3
James	4	7
Hannah	4	5
False Witness One	2	5
False Witness Two	2	4
Malchus	4	35
Narrator	-	15
Narrator Two	-	17
Narrator Three	-	5
Narrator Four	-	3
Narrator Five	-	2
Narrator Six	-	7
Narrator Seven	-	7
Narrator Eight	-	8

## SCENE NUMBER ONE

Time - 2am Friday - the Council of the 70 - with 69 men present. There is one empty chair.

**NARRATION ONE**—It is very late at night, about 3am this Friday morning. We are in the council chambers of the Jewish High Court, called the Sanhedrin. There are 70 members plus the President who sit on the Council. The President of the Sanhedrin is the Jewish High Priest by the name of Caiaphas. He is assisted by his father-in-law, Annas, who was the previous high priest. The high priest normally serves for life, but the Romans, who appoint the high priest as they saw fit, deposed Annas and appointed Caiaphas.

The court has been called together hastily. Members of the temple guard were sent out about an hour ago to round up the members of the Sanhedrin and bring them here to hear the special case against Jesus of Nazareth.

**NARRATION TWO**—It is time to meet the chief characters - the members of the Sanhedrin. Let me introduce you to: (Nicodemus walks in from off stage - is introduced - and then walks back off the stage. Each character takes a step forward and nods as introduced.)

Nicodemus - you will note that Nicodemus is not present this Friday. Perhaps we will learn more as the trial proceeds.

Caiaphas

Annas

Other members of the Court

Rabbi Joseph of Arimathea

Rabbi Benjamin

Rabbi Simon

Rabbi Mordecai

Malchus, Servant of the High Priest.

Now it is time for the trial to proceed. I urge all of you to be very quiet. The court is known for its insistence on the strictest enforcement of all its rules of proper decorum.

**CAIAPHAS**—Distinguished members of the Sanhedrin. I apologise for the inconvenience of calling you all here in the middle of the night. I would not have done so unless it were a NATIONAL emergency.

**RABBI JOSEPH**—Has something terrible happened? Has that Barbarian Roman Pontius Pilate again tried to do horrible things to our temple grounds?

**ANNAS**—Nothing like that. We finally have captured Jesus. He found out we had plotted to take His life. He was hiding in a village called Ephraim near the desert, until he showed up in Bethany last Saturday. By the time we found out, there were too many people around for us to have him killed. At least we have him now.

**CAIAPHAS**—We must act before the people find out what is going on and start a riot.

**RABBI MORDECAI**—How was Jesus captured?

**RABBI SIMON**—The High Priest paid 30 silver coins, the price of a slave to one of his disciples named Judas. The bribe worked. He helped us capture Jesus in a lonely place about 11:00 p.m. Now let's get on with it.

**ANNAS**—We have already had the first hearing which I conducted. Now we need to finish the legal trials and send Jesus to Pilate for confirmation of our verdict and execution. It must be done tonight.

**CAIAPHAS**—We all know why we are here and what we must do - find Jesus guilty of terrible crimes against God and the state and then have him executed.

**ANNAS**—We tried to deal nicely with this whole thing, but we were accomplishing nothing

**RABBI SIMON** —Here is this man Jesus, performing many miraculous signs. if we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him. The common people will probably riot, and then the Romans will come. They will put us out of power.

**RABBI BENJAMIN**—Then they would destroy our temple and our nation.

**CAIAPHAS**—You are so right. Certainly you must all realise that it is better that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.

**NARRATION THREE**—Caiaphas did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.

**RABBI BENJAMIN**—It looks like we are all here... 67, 68, 69 .... where is Nicodemus?

**CAIAPHAS**—I didn't ask him to come.

**RABBI BENJAMIN**—Why not?

**CAIAPHAS**—Let me remind you that Nicodemus is a fool - and probably worse than that, I think he is a traitor. Someone must be telling Jesus our secrets. How else could he know what we are thinking? One of my spies saw Nicodemus with Jesus nearly three years ago.

(Soldier One escorts in the spy and stand next to the spy as he prepares to give testimony)

He is our first witness. Tell us your story.

**RABBI MORDECAI**—(jumping to his feet and interrupting) Shouldn't the accused be present to hear the witnesses?

**ANNAS**—No, this is all just preliminary work.

**SPY**—Well, it was late evening about three years ago and Nicodemus went to see Jesus.

**RABBI SIMON**—So Nicodemus was sneaking around to see Jesus?

**SPY**—No, he was just following the custom of rabbis getting together and talking at night...

**ANNAS**—Enough - on with the story.

**SPY**—Well, Nicodemus said to Jesus...

(VOICE OF **NICODEMUS** OFF STAGE)—Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.

**SPY**—And Jesus said ...

(VOICE OF **JESUS** OFF STAGE)—I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

**SPY**—Nicodemus asked.

(VOICE OF **NICODEMUS** OFF STAGE) —How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!

**SPY**—Jesus answered,

(VOICE OF **JESUS** OFF STAGE) —I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Sinful flesh gives birth to sinful flesh, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to a new spirit in a man.

**SPY**—Nicodemus asked: "How can this be?" and Jesus responded ...

(VOICE OF **JESUS** OFF STAGE) —You are Israel's teacher and do you not understand these things?

**CAIAPHAS**—Enough! Get to the main point!

**SPY**—Yes Sir. Well Jesus said

(VOICE OF **JESUS** OFF STAGE) –No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

**CAIAPHAS**–It is plain to see even Jesus thought Nicodemus was a fool. Jesus was claiming to be God, and he compared himself to the sacred brass snake that saved our people in the desert.

**RABBI SIMON**–Well, He said he would be lifted up. Let’s lift him up on a Roman cross!

**ANNAS**–And you are all witness to how this Jesus has made a complete fool out of Nicodemus. Remember the incident of several years ago?

## **Scene Two**

**NARRATION FOUR**–We now take you take you back two years to a previous meeting of the court when Nicodemus was present. (Nicodemus comes in and takes his seat.)

(Soldier two leads in to temple guards who come marching in with military bearing)

**CAIAPHAS**–Well, it’s about time you got back. Where is the prisoner?

**GUARD ONE**–We didn’t arrest him.

**CAIAPHAS**–You didn’t arrest him?

**GUARD TWO**–You should have been there. Jesus was teaching some amazing things. No one ever taught like him before - he teaches like he has God’s authority, or even that he is God himself.

**GUARD ONE**–Some of the people said he must be a prophet

**GUARD TWO**–Others said he was God’s Son - the Messiah sent from heaven.

**GUARD ONE**–Some said he couldn’t be because the Messiah must be from King David’s family and be born in Bethlehem

**RABBI SIMON**–You mean he has deceived you also? Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law–there is a curse on them.

**NICODEMUS**–Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?

**RABBI SIMON**–Are you a stupid person from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.

**GUARD TWO**–But we found out his mother and father are from David’s line and Jesus was born in Bethlehem, though he was raised in Nazareth of Galilee.

**ANNAS**–You didn’t tell anyone that - did you?

**GUARD ONE**—Well...

**GUARD TWO**—(whisper to guard one) - Be quiet or we will be in real trouble (Turning toward Annas) OF COURSE NOT!

(Nicodemus gets up and leaves)

### **Scene Three**

**NARRATION FIVE**—We now return you to early Friday morning on Passover Day.

**CAIAPHAS**—so you see, we couldn't have someone like Nicodemus here interrupting the trial with his stupid questions.

**RABBI MORDECAI**—What about the miracles? We know Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and did many other miracles. Wasn't Nicodemus right about him coming from God?

**CAIAPHAS**—You are not one of Jesus' disciples, too, are you?

**ANNAS**—Jesus obviously is not from God - Don't you remember? He told people to sin. Bring in the next witness.

(Soldier One escorts in Jonas)

**CAIAPHAS**—Do you promise to tell the truth?

**WITNESS (JONAS)**—Yes

**CAIAPHAS**—Do you know the rules - you can only answer the questions asked?

**WITNESS (JONAS)**—Yes

**CAIAPHAS**—State your name

**JONAS**—My name is Jonas

**CAIAPHAS**—You are the man that Jesus told to carry his bed (turning to the judges) - that is to WORK on the Sabbath.

**JONAS**—Yes, but...

**CAIAPHAS**—that is all.

**RABBI MORDECAI**—I have a question. Jonas: Where did this happen?

**JONAS**—I was paralyzed and lying on my mat by the pool of Bethesda. I had been an invalid for 38 years. It was the Sabbath. Jesus came up to me and asked if I wanted to be well. When I said I did he told me, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once I was cured. Since he cured me I did what he said and went home.

**CAIAPHAS**—Enough of this witness. He told us twice that Jesus told him to work on the Sabbath. The law forbids people to carry their mats on the Sabbath. The next witness will prove Jesus himself worked on the Sabbath.

(Soldier One takes out Jonas and Soldier Two brings in Samuel)

**CAIAPHAS**—What is your name?

**WITNESS**—Samuel.

**CAIAPHAS**—What did Jesus do?

**SAMUEL**—I was blind and gave me back my sight.

**CAIAPHAS**—We are not interested in that! What day did this happen on?

**SAMUEL**—The Sabbath.

**CAIAPHAS**—See - Jesus is a sinner.

**RABBI SIMON**—Can we trust the witness - maybe he wasn't even healed.

**CAIAPHAS**—Bring in the next witnesses

(Soldier Two takes out Samuel and Soldier One brings in James and Hannah - who look very frightened)

**CAIAPHAS**—What are your names

**JAMES**—James

**HANNAH**—Hannah

**CAIAPHAS**—Is Samuel your son

**JAMES AND HANNAH**—(Speaking together - fearfully) - Yes

**CAIAPHAS**—What happened?

**JAMES**—We don't know. Our son was born blind and then one day he came home and could see.

**CAIAPHAS**—Are you saying Jesus healed him?

**HANNAH**—We don't know

**RABBI MORDECAI**—What is the matter? Are you afraid?

**HANNAH**—We don't want to be put out of the synagogue forever?

**RABBI MORDECAI**—Why do you say that?

**JAMES**—Oh the word is out. If anyone says he saw Jesus do a miracle he will be thrown out and condemned to suffer forever.

**CAIAPHAS**—Enough of this nonsense

(Caiaphas motions the guard to hurry James and Hannah out of the court.)

**RABBI MORDECAI**—But might we not be getting ourselves in trouble here? If this is from God we could be interfering and blaspheming

**ANNAS**—The only blasphemer is Jesus. He should have already been stoned for blasphemy.

**CAIAPHAS**—(Turning to Annas - in a whisper) Don't give up on that father—blasphemy may still being his undoing. If we could only get that fool to blaspheme in front of the whole court

(turning to judges) Not only did he heal people on the Sabbath but he said...

**JESUS - OFF STAGE**—My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.

**CAIAPHAS**—You can see why he must die. Not only was he breaking the breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

**CAIAPHAS**—Another time Jesus said to us, in public, mind you, right here in the temple ...

**JESUS - OFF STAGE**—If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ... My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. ... I tell you the truth before Abraham was born, I am!

**ANNAS**—We got the people to pick up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

**CAIAPHAS**—Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. We asked him "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered...

**JESUS - OFF STAGE**—I did tell you, but you do not believe. ...I and the Father are one.

**CAIAPHAS**—Again we picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus escaped our grasp. But enough of the past - Jesus will be here in a few minutes and we must move on.

**ANNAS**—Trial one is complete. Now let's get this trial over and done. After we condemn him we will get the Roman Governor Pilate to pass the death sentence In the morning and we will be rid of Jesus.



**RABBI BENJAMIN**—How did you manage to actually capture Jesus? Since he always seemed to get away before?

**CAIAPHAS**—We were lucky to catch him without bloodshed. One of his disciples almost killed my servant Malchus. Malchus - tell us about it.

**MALCHUS**—Judas, one of the twelve disciples went with us. He knew a place where Jesus had often met with his disciples at night. We went there with torches, lanterns and swords and clubs.

Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.

Jesus asked him, “Friend, why have you come? Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” and turning to us asked “Who is it you want?”

“Jesus of Nazareth,” we replied.

“I am he,” Jesus said.

When Jesus said, “I am he,” we drew back and fell to the ground.

**RABBI JOSEPH**—What was that you said?

**MALCHUS**—When he spoke we couldn’t help ourselves. We were helpless, we all fell back on the ground.

**ANNAS**—Enough - get back to the story and how murderous he and his disciples are.

**MALCHUS**—Again he asked us, “Who is it you want?”

And we said, “Jesus of Nazareth.”

“I told you that I am he,” Jesus answered. “If you are looking for me, then let these men go.”

Just then, one of Jesus’ companions, Simon Peter, reached for his sword, drew it out and tried to split my head in half. He struck me, cutting off my right ear.

**RABBI JOSEPH**—Did you say he cut off your ear? It looks to me like you still have your ear.

**MALCHUS**—I did and I do. Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched MY ear and healed ME. Then Jesus commanded Peter, “Put your sword away! for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way? Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”

**RABBI SIMON**—We will make sure he drinks his cup—it will be source wine while he hangs on the cross.

**MALCHUS**—Well then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. They bound him and brought him first to Annas.

**RABBI BENJAMIN**—What happened at the first trial?

**ANNAS**—I questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. He said:

**JESUS**—(off stage) I have spoken openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.

**ANNAS**—When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. “Is this the way you answer the high priest?” he demanded.

**JESUS**—(off stage) If I said something wrong testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?

**ANNAS**—Then I sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas our high priest.

**CAIAPHAS**—Let’s get on with it. Bring in the Prisoner

#### **Scene Four**

(Jesus Brought in by Soldier Two)

**NARRATION SIX**—The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Though many false witnesses came forward testified falsely against him, their statements did not agree. Finally two came forward and gave false testimony against him:

**CAIAPHAS**—Get me some more witnesses.

(Soldier One escorts in two new witnesses)

**CAIAPHAS**—I hope you two can do better than the last lot. We can’t waste any more time.

**WITNESS ONE**—We sure can - This fellow said, “Destroy Herod’s Great temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

**WITNESS TWO**—It was even worse than that. He said “I am able to destroy this man-made temple of God and and in three days will build another, not made by man.”

**WITNESS ONE**—He said if someone else destroyed, and you have added words.

**WITNESS TWO**—No I am sure....

**CAIAPHAS**—Enough! You are excused (The witnesses are taken out and the soldier comes back an stand on the other side of Jesus.)

**CAIAPHAS**—(standing in front of Jesus) Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?

(Jesus remains silent and gives no answer.)

**CAIAPHAS**—(looks at Annas with a sly smile on his face) Jesus, I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, (Messiah) the Son of the Blessed One?

**JESUS**—Yes, it is as you say. But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.

**CAIAPHAS**—(with a look of triumph tears his robes and then with a look of mock horror) He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

**RABBI SIMON**—(jumping up and shouting) He is worthy of death!

**ALL THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SANHEDRIN BUT JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA**—(jump up and shout) He is worthy of death!

### Scene Five

**NARRATION SEVEN**—Then some began to spit at him in his face; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists Others slapped him and said, "Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit you?" And they said many other insulting things to him. And the guards took him and beat him. Then at daybreak they brought Jesus back. Joseph of Arimathea was no longer present.

### Scene Six

(There are two empty chairs - Joseph's & Nicodemus')

**CAIAPHAS**—Jesus last night you were found guilty of death. What do you say?

Jesus stands silently

**RABBIS**—(speaking together) Jesus, If you are the Messiah, tell us.

**JESUS**—If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.

**RABBIS**—(speaking together) Are you then the Son of God?

**JESUS**—You are right in saying I Am.

**CAIAPHAS**—Why do we need any more testimony?

**ANNAS**—We have heard it from his own lips.

**CAIAPHAS**—It is time for the vote. Stand up to vote that Jesus is to be put to death.

(The whole assembly rises.)

**CAIAPHAS**—It's time to take him to Pilate to die.

(Caiaphas and Annas lead a procession from the court.)

**FINAL NARRATION**—They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor. Later in the morning at 9:00AM Jesus was nailed to a cross and by 3:00PM he was dead. On the third day Jesus rose from the dead. The Sanhedrin then bribed the soldiers who watched the grave to say the disciples of Jesus stole his body during the night. They would not admit they were wrong and Jesus is the Savior for the world.