

The Taking of Christ

Caravaggio

"The Taking of Christ" by Caravaggio depicts the arrest of Jesus just as Judas kisses Jesus to identify him for the soldiers. There are seven figures in the painting; they are John, Jesus, Judas, three soldiers, and a man holding a lantern to the scene.

The figures are portrayed before a very dark background. The man at the right holding a lantern is believed to be a self-portrait of Caravaggio. At the far left, St John is fleeing as a soldier is grabbing his cloak.

The Italian Baroque master Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio would have had many influences on the composition of this masterpiece.

One of these influences may have been an 1509 woodcut by Albrecht Dürer in which the central group is comprised of Jesus, Judas, and the soldier with an outstretched hand, resembling this version of Caravaggio's "The Taking of Christ."

This story from the New Testament was in high demand as a painting, as there are at least 12 known actual copies of this painting. At least one is believed to be an original copy made by Caravaggio.

By the late 18th century, this original painting was thought to have disappeared, and its whereabouts remained unknown for about 200 years.

In 1990, this lost masterpiece was recognized and discovered in the residence of the Society of Jesus in Dublin, Ireland. The painting had passed down through many owners.



It had long been considered a copy of the lost original by the various owners.

After experts were asked to examine it for restoration and the layers of dirt and discolored varnish were removed, the technical quality of the painting was revealed, and it was eventually identified as Caravaggio's lost painting.

Also- Check out this story of this painting: <https://youtu.be/L-miahgbeJk>



Digging Deeper

Acts 6:11-15 – The Charges Against Stephen

Stephen is arrested on false charges and put on trial (Acts 6: 11-15). The false charges against Stephen concern his attitude toward the Law and the Temple. Luke is clear that these are false charges against Stephen. He is not against the Law or the Temple.

The charges are similar to those brought against Jesus when he was before the Sanhedrin. Ben Witherington observes that Luke is patterning the death of Stephen after the trial and execution of Jesus.

There are at least ten things the two trials have in common, and two which only appear in Luke/Acts. First, both Jesus and Stephen commit their spirit to God and second both pray for forgiveness for his accusers.

This is an important observation since in the Gospels the Jewish people reject Jesus as the Messiah, in Acts they are rejecting the promised Holy Spirit, the foundation for the Messianic Kingdom. Both rejections are punctuated by an execution of an innocent man. This in no way says anything about Stephen being exactly like Jesus. It is significant, however, that the first time a Jesus-follower is executed he dies just like Jesus did.

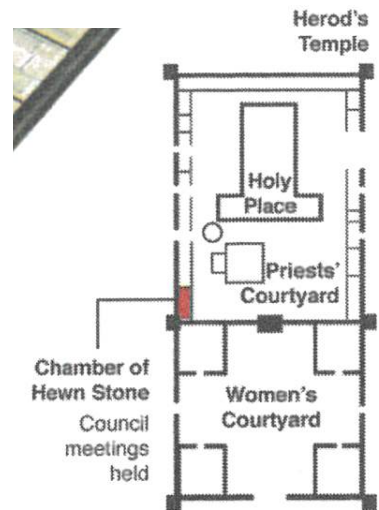
As for the charges, perhaps Stephen used Jesus' statement that he would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days or his prediction the Temple would be destroyed in the near future in his preaching in the Synagogue. This could have been used against him in the same way Jesus was accused of threatening the Temple. Both Jesus and Stephen stand within a grand tradition of offering a critique of the Temple and the Priesthood. The prophets of the Hebrew Bible frequently condemned the priests and Temple worship (Jer 7, for example). The Essenes represent a Second Temple period critique and condemnation of the worship nearer the time of Jesus. A Jew saying the High Priest and Temple was corrupt was not particularly revolutionary—but to say the work of your teacher replaced the work of the Temple would have been radical.

Stephen represents a different strata of Second Temple period Judaism which has the potential to be more open to the gospel of Jesus as Messiah and the coming Kingdom of God. But just like the Judean Jewish leadership, the synagogue of the Hellenists resist the Holy Spirit as well. Stephen is therefore arrested like the Apostles have been before.

But in this case, Stephen gives a lengthy prophetic sermon condemning the Jewish aristocracy for their resistance against the Holy Spirit, leading to his dramatic execution at the end of chapter seven and the equally dramatic introduction of Saul of Tarsus, persecutor of the church.

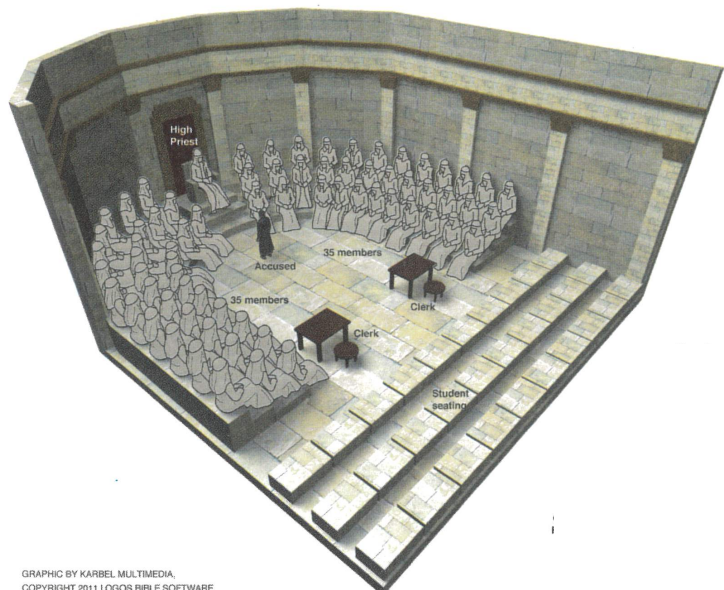
Here is a problem for the readers of Acts.

Luke chose to place this story where he did, balancing his historical, literary and theological motives. Is this solely a critique of the Temple? What is happening in the unfolding story of salvation history in Acts 6-7? What is Luke's point in placing this arrest, prophetic speech and lynching of Stephen at this point in his narrative?



The Sanhedrin

The Jewish high court of justice consisted of 71 men and was led by the high priest. The council could decide almost any fate of its people—except the death penalty, which was decided by the Romans. The court was located within the Chamber of Hewn Stone inside Herod's Temple.



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