

NT 2235 THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS – Fall 2019 – Mon. & Thur. 08:10 - 09:30

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Office hours: Mon. and Thurs. 11:15-12:30 or by appointment.

1. Course description. This lecture course for MDiv, MA, and MTS students first reviews critical and methodological issues in the study of the Synoptic Gospels. Exegesis of selected passages will be used to provide in-depth understanding of the origins of the Synoptic traditions and their theology, christology, ecclesiology and eschatology as seen in the life, Passion, and Resurrection of Jesus and in the early Church. This discussion will include the Christological titles, the miracles of Jesus, the parables of the Kingdom, the Sermon on the Mount, the Passion and Resurrection Narratives. Students will be expected to provide a one-page response to ten selections of readings to be posted on moodle. The goal for the student is to be able to discuss the historical and theological issues of the Synoptic Gospels against the background of the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds between the 2nd century BCE and 1st century CE. Evaluation will be based on the weekly essays (25%), a mid-term (20%), an 8-12 page research paper (25%), and a final examination (30%).

2. Course objectives.

- The student will be able to discuss the formation of the Synoptic traditions.
- The student will have a grasp of the distinctive Christology, soteriology, and eschatology of each of the Synoptic gospels.
- The student will be able to discuss the role of the miracles and parables in each of the Synoptic gospels.
- The student will be able to discuss the way in which each evangelist incorporates common material into the respective gospel.
- The student will have an understanding of Luke's historiography and how he integrates the material of Acts with his gospel.
- In light of the above the student will understand the gospels as one of the foundations of the theological disciplines.
- The term paper will reflect the student's knowledge of the tools and methodologies for researching and writing on issues related to the Synoptic gospels.

3. Course Requirements.

a. There are ten (10) exercises with due dates indicated starting on page 3. The exercises may range in length from one paragraph to one page. Try not to exceed one page in length. Five of them cover basic concepts; two test your ability to read the given texts carefully; the last tests your ability to compare a rabbinic text with the gospel texts [Total will be 25% of final grade].

b. The mid-term will be on October 18th [25% of final grade].

c. The final examination is scheduled for December 12th. It will cover material from the mid-term on, although the student will be expected to be able to apply what was covered in the first part of the course [25% of final grade].

d. The final paper, described in §6 below, is due on 5 December 2019 [25% of final grade].

☛ As an aid to research see the file on Moodle entitled "Tools for Biblical Study." Available on Moodle is a selection of electronic media tools available as of 2006. Also check the following library link: <http://www.gtu.edu/library/electronic-resources>. Staff can help you with any difficulty.

☛ On September 9th part of the class period will be taken up with a field trip to the GTU library to introduce you to important resources (that is, books and periodicals) and how to use them.

5. Textbook. There is no required textbook. A bibliography of useful commentaries and studies will be posted on Moodle. Articles and selections from books will also be posted on Moodle to supplement lectures.

☛ Bring a Bible to every class!

Aside from the readings assigned below, you may find the following books helpful.

PHEME PERKINS. *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.
ISBN-13: 978-0802817709; retails for \$28.00.
[Available through <http://astore.amazon.com/dspt-20>]

The best discussion by far of the Synoptic Problem but unfortunately out of print is

E. P. SANDERS and MARGARET DAVIES. *Studying the Synoptic Gospels.* London: SCM Press – Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989. Relevant passages will be posted on Moodle.

You may find a synopsis of the four gospels useful. Recommended is

KURT ALAND, ed. *Synopsis of the Four Gospels: Completely Revised on the Basis of the Greek Text of the Nestle Aland (English-only text; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).* **Please note** that this is an all-English edition and expensive. There exist an all-Greek edition, and a bilingual edition both of which are also expensive. If you cannot find a used copy, then try

H. F. D. SPARKS *A Synopsis of the Gospels, Part 1: The Synoptic Gospels with the Johannine Parallels* (London: A. & C. Clark, 1976) **or** **B. H. THROCKMORTON.** *Gospel Parallels: A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels, NRSV Edition* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1992) [does not include Johannine parallels]. Prices on Amazon depend on edition, most expensive being c. \$23.00. [Greeven, recommended by Sanders and Davies, is unavailable.]

☛ The course outline makes reference to the following books, which may be consulted to supplement lectures. Required readings and supplementary material are posted on Moodle.

RAYMOND E. BROWN. *An Introduction to the New Testament* ABRL; Garden City: Doubleday, 1997.

JOEL B. GREEN. ed. *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation.* 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

JOHN H. HAYES and CARL R. HOLLADAY. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook.* 3rd ed.; Louisville: John Knox Westminster, 2007.

PHEME PERKINS. *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

STANLEY E. PORTER, ed. *Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament.* Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002.

E. P. SANDERS and MARGARET DAVIES. *Studying the Synoptic Gospels.* London: SCM – Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989.

☛ Read through Mark, Matthew, and Luke, preferably in that order. Read the Acts of the Apostles, being attentive to language and themes found in Gospel of Luke. Additionally you will find on Moodle my précis of basic issues in the Synoptic Gospels. It is important that you read through the notes on the characteristics of the individual gospels.

6. Essay of approximately 8-10 pages due 5 December 2019.

- The topic should be chosen from either the miracle narratives, the parables, or the controversy accounts. You must deal with a pericope found in at least two of the Synoptic gospels. It may come from the Triple Tradition, from Q, from a tradition found in Matthew and Luke, from Mark and Matthew, or Mark and Luke.
- Consult with professor by the end of September about your topic to find out whether it is feasible and acceptable.
- Your paper should include but not be limited to the following, where relevant. What is the Old Testament background? If you are dealing with a passage in the Triple Tradition, are Matthew and Luke dependent on Mark or does Q reflect an alternate tradition of the same passage? If relevant to the discussion, how does one account for the minor agreement between Matthew and Luke against Mark? If relevant, which of the evangelists represents the original narrative form? How is each account related to the individual evangelist's christological and narrative concerns?
- **Submit a comprehensive bibliography on the topic no later than 15 October and schedule meeting with the professor to discuss your topic.** The bibliography must include periodical literature. Articles in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary or Anchor Bible Dictionary or similar comprehensive commentaries do not count, although you may consult them; neither do annotations in study Bibles.

☛ Consult **John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay**, Ch. 12 “Integrating Exegetical Procedures,” 178-190 [[on Moodle](#)]; Paretsky, “Notes on writing an exegesis paper” [[on Moodle](#)]; GTU library info sheet on exegesis papers [[link on Moodle](#)]

7. Exercises on special topics are at the end of this syllabus together with the due dates. They should be one paragraph to one page in length and may be submitted in hard copy or electronically in doc(x), wpd, or odt format. **Please do not submit in pdf**, since it is difficult to make comments on pdf documents.

8. IMPORTANT DATES.

- ☛ Bibliography due 14 October 2019
- ☛ Mid-term 17 October 2019.
- ☛ Reading Week 21 - 25 October 2019.
- ☛ Thanksgiving Day 28 November 2019 – No class.
- ☛ Term paper due 5 December 2019.
- ☛ Class evaluation and course review session for final exam on 9 December 2019.
- ☛ Final exam 12 December 2019.

9. COURSE OUTLINE.

Part One — Introductory issues.

1. Review the basic issues regarding the historical-critical method by reading [all available on Moodle] • **Fitzmyer, J. A.** “Historical Criticism: Its Role in Biblical Interpretation and Church Life,” *Theological Studies* 50 (1989) 244-259; • **Brown, R. E.** *The Critical Meaning of the Bible* (New York: Paulist, 1981), ch. 1 & 2; • *Commissionis Biblicae Instructio de Historica Evangeliorum Veritate* (1964). English translation in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 26 (1964) 305-312.

See if you can answer the following questions. What are the core assumptions of the “Historical Critical Method”? What is the relationship of faith to historical truth? How can the Word of God be subject to any critical method?

2. What is a “gospel”? • **Read Perkins**, pp. 1-30; **Brook W. R. Pearson** and **Stanley E. Porter**, “The Genres of the New Testament” in **Porter, S. E.** (ed.). *Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002, 137-161 [[on Moodle](#)]; **Brown, R. E.** *An Introduction to the New Testament* (ABRL; Garden City: Doubleday, 1997) pp. 102-107 [[on Moodle](#)]

3. Synoptic problem. • **READ Brown, R. E.** *An Introduction to the New Testament* (ABRL; Garden City: Doubleday, 1997) pp. 111-122 [[on Moodle](#)]; **Sanders, E. P. and M. Davies.** *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM – Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 51-119 [[on Moodle](#)].

Some solutions:

- Griesbach Hypothesis
- Two-Source Theory
- Other solutions

4. Tools used.

a. **Text Criticism.** Additional reading. Paretsky, Notes on Text of NT [[on Moodle](#)]; **Aland, K.** and **B.** *The Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); **Epp, E. J.** “Textual Criticism in the Exegesis of the New Testament” in **Porter, Handbook**, 45-91 [[on Moodle](#)]

b. **Uses and limits of Form Criticism** (*Formgeschichte*) presupposes small discrete units of narrative. • **READ Perkins**, 96-125; **Hayes and Holladay**, Ch. 6 “Form Criticism: The Genre and Life Setting of the Text”, 104-114 [[on Moodle](#)]; **D. R. Catchpole**, “Source, Form and Redaction Criticism of the New Testament,” in **Porter, Handbook**, 167-187 [[on Moodle](#)]; [critique of form criticism and of oral tradition]in **Sanders, E. P. and M. Davies.** *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM – Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 134-145 [[on Moodle](#)].

c. **Uses and limits of Redaction Criticism** (*Redaktionsgeschichte*) presupposes conscious adaptation of existing source. • **READ Hayes and Holladay**, Ch. 8 “Redaction Criticism: The Final Viewpoint and Theology” 127-138 [[on Moodle](#)]; **Gail P. C. Streete**, “Redaction Criticism,” in **Haynes, S. R. and S. L. McKenzie**, eds. *To Each Its Own Meaning. An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (rev. ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 105-121 [[on Moodle](#)].

d. **Source Criticism and Intertextuality.** **Viviano, P. A.** “Source Criticism,” in **Haynes and McKenzie**, 35-57 [[on Moodle](#) under Miller and Viviano]; **Hayes and Holladay**, “Tradition Criticism: The Stages behind the Text” in Hayes and Holladay, 115-126 [[on Moodle](#)]; David R. Catchpole, “Source, Form and Redaction Criticism of the New Testament,” in **Porter, Handbook**, 167-187 [[on Moodle](#)]; Hays, R. B. and J. B. Green, “The Use of the Old Testament by New Testament Writers,” in **Green**, 222-238 [[on Moodle](#)]; **Beal, T. K.** “Intertextuality,” in **Adam, A. K. M.**, ed. *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000). [[on Moodle](#)].

e. Use of extra-biblical Jewish material,^{1st} century Judaism and the growth of the rabbinic tradition (“source criticism”). **Bauckham, R.** “The Relevance of Extra-Canonical Jewish Texts to New Testament Study,” in **Green**, 90-108 [[on Moodle](#)].

f. **Rhetorical Criticism.** **Cunningham, D. S.** “Rhetoric,” in **Adam, A. K. M.**, ed. *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000), 220-226 [[on Moodle](#)]; **Black, C.C.** “Rhetorical Criticism,” in **Green**, 166-188 [[on Moodle](#)]. • For further discussion – what are the rhetorical patterns in the Sermon on the Mount?

g. Historical, Social and Literary Background.

5. Apocalyptic • **Read** 2 Thess 2:1-12; Mark 13, Matthew 24-25, Luke 21, Luke 12:4-56; Paretsky, “Notes on Apocalyptic” [[on Moodle](#)]; **Collins, J. J.** “From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: Expectation of the End,” in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*. Edited by B. McGinn, J. J. Collins, S. J. Stein. New York/London: 2003, 64-68, 85-86 [[on Moodle](#)]; **VanderKam, J. C.** “Messianism and Apocalypticism,” in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, 112-115, 127-137.

6. Dating the gospels. **Consult** Brown, Kümmel, or NJBC; **consult** Tuckett, “The Synoptic Gospels and Acts,” in Porter, *Handbook*, 477-494 [[on Moodle](#)].

7. Theological perspectives of the different gospels. • **Read** Paretsky, Introductory notes, 8-17 [[on Moodle](#)]; **Tuckett, C. M.** “The Synoptic Gospels and Acts,” in Porter, *Handbook*, 477-494 [[on Moodle](#)]; **Perkins, P.**, 126-253.

8. Luke as historian. • **Read** Paretsky, “Luke as Historian” [[on Moodle](#)]; **Alexander, L. C. A.** “The Relevance of Greco-Roman Literature and Culture to New Testament Study,” [especially pp. 94-100] in **Green**, 85-101.

9. Title Christology. • **Read** Paretsky, “Title Christology” [[on Moodle](#)].

Part Two — Exegesis

☛ Read the sections to be discussed beforehand.

1. THE ORIGINS OF JESUS: Mark 1:1-15, Matt 1:1-4:17, Luke 1:5-4:30

Superscription to the individual gospels.

The genealogies of Matthew and Luke. ☛ Compare 1 Chronicles 1 – 9. Note carefully 1:32.39, 2:3-4.16. 18-19.21-24 and so on up to 7:14-19. Note 9:1-2. What is missing at 2:12 when compared with Matthew's genealogy of Jesus?

John the Baptist (Compare Mark 6:14-29, Matt 14:1-12, Luke 9:7-9).

The Baptism of Jesus.

Kingdom of God.

The Temptation Narratives

2. CALL OF THE TWELVE: Mark 1:16-20, 3:13-19; Matt 4:18-22, 10:1-4; Luke 5:1-11, 6:12-16.

The lists.

The role of the twelve among the disciples.

Role of Peter.

The relationship between *hoi dōdeka* and *hoi apostoloi*.

3. EXORCISMS AND HEALING MIRACLES: Mark 1:21-28, Luke 4:31-37; Mark 2:1-12, Matt 9:1-8, Luke 5:17-26; Mark 5:21-43, Matt 9:18-26, Luke 8:40-56

The paradigm of the gospel miracles and their theological significance.

“Son of Man” title.

Healing looks forward to Resurrection.

4. NATURE MIRACLES: Mark 4:35-41, Matt 8:23-27, Luke 8:22-25

Jesus operating in the power of YHWH.

Apocalyptic motifs.

5. CONTROVERSY: Mark 3:20-35, Matt 12:22-32.46-50, Luke 11:14-23, 8:19-21, 12:10

Jesus's technique of argument (cf. Mark 2:1-12, Matt 9:1-8, Luke 5:17-26; Mark 7:1-23, Matt 15:1-20; Mark 12:18-27, Matt 22:23-33, Luke 20:27-40)

6. PARABLES: Matt 11:16-19, Luke 7:31-35; Mark 4:1-20, Matt 13:1-23, Luke 8:4-15.

Consult Kister, Menahem. “Parables and Proverbs in the Jesus-Tradition and Rabbinic Literature,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 41 no. 1 (2018) 5-28[on Moodle]; Scott, B. B. *Re-Imagine the World: An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge, 2001).

Concentrating on genre of the parables, Parables of the Kingdom, and their use in Jesus's teaching.

7. **SERMON ON THE MOUNT/SERMON ON THE PLAIN** Matt 5-7, Luke 6:17-49 (and parallels in Luke to “Sermon on the Mount” not found in “Sermon on the Plain”)

Role of Sermon on the Mount in Matthew.
Jesus as new Moses.
The Beatitudes.
The Lord’s Prayer.
The House on Rock and the House on Sand.

8. **CONFESSION OF PETER:** Mark 8:27-33, Matt 16:13-23, Luke 9:18-20

Messiah.
Passion predictions.

9. **APOCALYPTIC ESCHATOLOGY: TRANSFIGURATION:** Mark 9:2-8, Matt 17:1-8, Luke 9:28-36 and **ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM:** Mark 11:1-11, Matt 21:1-11, Luke 19:28-40

Jesus as revealer of eschatological hope.
Themes of the Sukkoth.
Adam’s lost glory.
Apocalyptic eschatology and the Holy War: glory of God re-enters the Temple.

10. **FEEDING OF THE 5000/4000:** Mark 6:30-44.52, 8:1-10; Matt 14:13-21, 15:32-39; Luke 9:10-17 and **LAST SUPPER:** Mark 14:1-31, Matt 26:1-35, Luke 22:1-34, 1 Cor 10:16, 11:23-25

Passover.
Liturgical re-formation of the traditions.
Institution of the Eucharist.
Jesus as representative of divine providence in the Exodus.
Eucharistic motifs.

11. **TRIAL OF JESUS:** Mark 14:53-15:15, Matt 26:57-27:26, Luke 22:54-23:25

Problems when compared with Jewish law.
Literary parallels between trial before Sanhedrin and trial before Pilate.

12. **PASSION:** Mark 15:16-47, Matt 27:27-61, Luke 23:26-56

Formation of the traditions.
Perspective of each of the evangelists.

13. **RESURRECTION:** Mark 16, Matt 28, Luke 24

Empty tomb tradition.
Structure and purpose of the narratives.
The ending of each of the Gospels.

WEEKLY EXERCISES

- ☞ [due 09 Sept] **THE ORAL TRADITION.** (Note: you may answer these questions in any order you like, including a synthesis of the issues.) How does oral discourse foster continuity within the culture and how does it challenge the received view of reality? What role does historicity play in the oral traditioning process? What is the purpose of repetition and variations on a theme? What creates and what impedes the unity of speaker, message, and hearer? What is the nature of heroic stories, polarization stories, didactic stories and parabolic stories.
Read [on Moodle] W. H. Kelber. “Mark’s Oral Legacy,” in *The Oral and the Written Gospel (The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q)* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 44-89.
- ☞ [due 16 Sept] **THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM.** What is meant by the Synoptic Problem? What is meant by the argument from order (sequence)? What is the Griesbach hypothesis and what are its strengths and weaknesses? What is the Two-Source Theory and what are its strengths and weaknesses? How does the absence of Q affect Mark’s presentation of Jesus in relation to Matthew and Luke?
Read [on Moodle] Brown, R. E. *An Introduction to the New Testament* (ABRL; Garden City: Doubleday, 1997) pp. 99-125 [on Moodle]; Sanders, E. P. and M. Davies. *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM – Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 51-119 [on Moodle]; Perkins, P., 56-96; Kelber, W. “The Written Gospel as Counterform to Oral Speech” [on Moodle].
- ☞ [due 23 Sept] **APOCALYPTICISM.** Discuss apocalyptic eschatology, its sociological milieu, and its relationship to the teaching of Jesus.
Read [on Moodle] Collins, J. J. “From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: Expectation of the End,” in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*. Edited by B. McGinn, J. J. Collins, S. J. Stein. New York/London: 2003, 64-68, 85-86; Allison, D. C. “The Eschatology of Jesus,” in *idem*, 139-165.
- ☞ [due 30 Sept] **“THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER”** (Mark 1:40-45, Matt 8:1-4, Luke 5:12-16). **Read** the accounts in themselves and in comparison with each other. What is the context of each? What is common to each? What elements are distinctive of each evangelist? What is the significance of each account within its respective gospel? [It will be helpful to consult the Greek text or to look at two or more different translations.]
- ☞ [due 7 Oct] **PARABLES.** What is a parable? To what in the Old Testament are parables related? What is meant by “myth” and how are parables “antimyth”? What is distinctively Jewish about the parables of Jesus? Can the parable of the Sower and the Seed exist independent of the allegory? What is the nature of parables of the Kingdom? How do Mark, Matthew and Luke respectively use parables? **READ B. B. Scott, Hear Then the Parable. A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus** (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 3-62 [on Moodle]; Notley, R. Steven. “Reading Gospel Parables as Jewish Literature,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 41 no. 1 (2018) 28-43 [on Moodle] **Perkins**, 114-119.
- ☞ [due 14 Oct] **“THE BEHEADING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST”** (Mark 6:14-29, Matt 14:1-12, Luke 9:7-9). To the extent that you can determine, what are possible Old Testament echoes in the setting and the narrative? How are the three accounts similar and how are they different? What is the setting in each of the gospels? How has each evangelist incorporated the account into the respective gospel?

📖 [due 28 Oct] **GETHSEMANE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Read and identify any element in Mark 14:32-42 which can be found in Mark 13. Identify elements in Mark 14:32-42 which can be found in Matt 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. What element of Luke 22:39-46 is found in Matt 6:9-13 but not in Luke 11:2-4? [It will be helpful to consult the Greek text or to look at two or more different translations.]

📖 [due 4 Nov] **PAROUSIA AND THE ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM.** How does Matthew's usage in chapter 24 relate to Jewish understanding of *parousia*? How do the accounts of the entrance into Jerusalem relate to both Hebrew and non-Jewish Hellenistic usage?

Matthew is the only evangelist to use the term *parousia* (Matt 24:3.27.37.39). Read his usage in context. **Read** Mark 11:1-11, Matt 21:1-11, Luke 19:28-40. **Read** "Day of the Lord" in Hebrew Scriptures (from TDOT [on Moodle](#)); *Parousia* in the New Testament (from TDNT [on Moodle](#)); Kinman, B. "Parousia, Jesus' 'A-Triumphal' Entry, and the Fate of Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-44)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 118 (1999) 279-294.

📖 [due 11 Nov] **WHAT WAS THE LAST SUPPER AND WHEN DID IT OCCUR?**

What are the issues involved in determining the date of the Last Supper? Did Jesus celebrate a Passover Seder? What is the evidence for and against the evangelists' identification of the Last Supper as a Passover Seder (regardless of whether we can date the Last Supper on the eve of the 15th of Nisan)?

Read Mark 14:1-31, Matt 26:1-35, Luke 22:1-34, 1 Cor 5:7, 11:23-25. **J. A. Fitzmyer** on dating the Last Supper and what kind of meal it was (from *The Gospel According to Luke* [AB 28A] 1378-1382, 1389-1395 [on Moodle](#)); **J. P. Meier**, "The Dates of the Last Supper and of the Crucifixion of Jesus," *A Marginal Jew... vol. 1* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1991, 386-400 [on Moodle](#)); **J. Marcus**, "Passover and Last Supper Revisited," *NTS* 59 (2013) 303-324 [on Moodle](#).

📖 [due 18 Nov] **TRIAL OF JESUS BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN.** What are the rules for capital cases according to tractate Sanhedrin of the Mishnah. How are these followed or violated in the gospel accounts? What important detail is missing from the end of Luke's account of the trial before the Sanhedrin when compared with Matthew and Mark?

Read "The Mishnah on Capital Cases" [on Moodle](#). **Read** Mark 14:53-65, Matt 26:57-68, Luke 22:54-71