

John 18

- I. 18:1-12 Betrayal and Arrest
- II. 18:13-27 Before the High Priest(s)
- III. 18:28-40 Before Pilate

I. 18:1-12 Betrayal and Arrest

- A. 18:1 *a garden* to the Garden of Gethsemane (Oil Press) on the Mount of Olives . John doesn't include Christ's agonizing in prayer. He's focusing on other details.
- B. 18:2 Someone apparently gave Jesus regular access to their garden when He was in town. Therefore, Judas knew it.
- C. 18:3 The word “detachment” indicates several hundred soldiers. Why would they need that many? It was 12 guys known for preaching and teaching – not violence.
- D. 18:4 *knowing all things* None of this catches Jesus by surprise. John doesn't mention the kiss from Judas, but it probably came right before Jesus spoke.
- E. 18:5 *I am (He)* Notice that “He” is in italics. It's an added word in the translation. What Jesus says has a double meaning. It can mean “I am He (whom you seek)”, or it can be “I AM” going back to the divine name God gave to Moses in Exodus 3:14. Jesus has used this term of Himself before:

John 8:23 (NKJV) And He said to them, “You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am (He), you will die in your sins.”

John 8:28 (NKJV) Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am (He), and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.

- F. 18:6 *they drew back and fell to the ground* Look at how the soldiers respond to Christ's words. Who is in control here?
 - i. I have heard this verse cited to justify the practice of “being slain in the Spirit” when someone lays hands on them. If that's the best Scriptural support available, someone should probably rethink the whole idea. Don't *fall* for it.
 - ii. Christ, the Last Adam 1 Cor. 15:45 met the enemy in a garden and triumphed, while the first Adam did the same and failed. The first Adam hid himself while Christ boldly identified Himself. The presence that attracts believers repels the lost.
- G. 18:10 Peter is probably somewhat disoriented. Remember, he just got up (Matt. 26:40). Luke tells us that Jesus healed the man's ear (Luke 22:51). Otherwise Calvary might have had one more cross. Lesson: Jesus doesn't need our protection; we need His.

II. 18:13-27 Before the High Priest(s)

Annas and Caiaphas: The position of *high priest* was chaotic at this time. At this moment Caiaphas held the office of high priest, but Annas held the power behind the position. Jewish tradition appointed high priests for life. The Roman rulers made it a political office. Annas was made high priest in 7 AD by Quirinius governor of Syria, but was removed in AD 15. Still, he remained so influential that five of his sons plus his son-in-law Caiaphas eventually managed to get the title.

Annas was arrogant, crafty, ambitious and filthy rich. He made his fortune in the business of religion. He oversaw the tables of the money changers and the sale of sacrificial animals. There were four “Booths of the Sons of Annas” on the Mount of Olives and another branch within the Temple courts. These would have been the tables that Jesus overturned and the animals Jesus drove out. Annas and his family were so corrupt and that fact was so well known that the Talmud, written after this time, actually pronounces “woes” upon Annas and his family (Pes 57a).

- A. 18:15-16 *other disciple* Most believe the other disciple was John, the author of this Gospel. That's how he identifies himself in John 20. Others have suggested Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea because they were prominent men and members of the Sanhedrin.

One story goes (and maybe it's true!) that this acquaintance goes back to John's days in his father Zebedee's fishing business. Supposedly, salted fish from the Sea of Galilee was a delicacy in Jerusalem, so John sold fish for his father to the high priest's family.

- B. 18:17 Note the word “also” (in most manuscripts). The servant girl and those at the fire knew John was a disciple of Jesus, so she didn't ask him – only Peter.
- C. 18:19 Annas is asking the questions, but he's the one who is actually on trial.
- D. 18:20-21 Christ's teaching was never intended for some for a small, elite group. It is for all to hear and understand. It is *exoteric* rather than *esoteric*.
- E. 18:25 Poor Peter:
- i. He boasted three times that he would be faithful to Jesus (Mat 26:33, 35; John 13:37)
 - ii. In Gethsemane he fell asleep three times when Jesus asked him to stay awake. (Mark 14:32-41)
 - iii. Now he has denied the Lord three times, just as Jesus predicted.
 - iv. In John 21, Jesus will ask him to confirm his love three times.

III. 18:28-40 Before Pilate

- A. 18:28 *Praetorium* This was Herod the Great's old palace. Pilate used it when he came to Jerusalem from Caesarea. He came to keep order during the feasts, when Jerusalem was very crowded (> 2 million people) and riots might break out.

Look how far religious men will go to keep their traditions: They are unjustly trying to get Jesus executed, but would not enter this palace, because it was the home of a Gentile – the Roman governor. They want to stay “clean” during the entire week-long feast.

- B. 18:30 They don't really answer the question, do they?
- C. 18:31 They wanted an execution, not a fair trial. The Romans had taken the right to execute criminals away from the Jews a few years before.
- D. 18:32 Jesus talked about being “lifted up”. The Jewish method of execution was stoning. OT prophecy (e.g. Psalm 22) also clearly points to crucifixion.
- E. 18:34 Like Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate is the one on trial.
- F. 18:36 Christ's kingdom:

"This is the crucial point. While human politics is based on the premise that society must be changed in order to change people, in the politics of the Kingdom it is people who must be changed in order to change society."

– Charles Colson - Kingdoms In Conflict

I like the word “now” in Christ's response.

- G. 18:37 Jesus clearly states that there are those on the side of the truth and those on the side of falsehood. He made this case earlier in an argument with some religious leaders.

John 8:44-47 (NKJV) “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.”

- H. 18:38 *“What is truth?” And when he had said this, he went out* Pilate was staring truth in the face. Had he waited for an answer, Jesus might have directed him back to John 14:6: “I am the ... truth...”

- i. Pilate's question may have come from one of two directions:
 - a) As a politician, he was a professional compromiser. The right answer to any question was the one that gave him the desired results.
 - b) As a pantheist. The ancient Greeks and Romans believed in the worship of all gods. They saw deity within the universe and its phenomena. It was probably closer to modern Hinduism than anything else we know. Another god could always be added to the mix.
 - Rival concepts of truth existed simultaneously. The Greek philosophers, engaged in an endless quest for truth, came up with widely varying and even contradictory answers. Many people still think this way – that truth is in the eye of the observer.

“Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts.”
– Daniel Patrick Moynihan

Conclusion:

Jesus is the ultimate fact. He is reality personified. He demands and deserves our complete attention, allegiance and obedience.

In this chapter we've seen Jesus standing on trial before Annas, Caiaphas and Pilate. We know from the other Gospels that He also stood before Herod. They found nothing wrong in Him.

Someday Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, you and I will stand before Jesus in judgment. But since we all have sinned, He has the right and the power to find us guilty. This is why His suffering and death is such a wonderful act of love. He satisfied the justice of God so that we could experience God's love and His grace.

As believers dare we offer Him anything but complete obedience?