

John 18 13-40

Would you please turn in your bibles to John 18?

Last week we studied the first 12 verses of John 18 as we discovered the significance of the brook Kidron, and witnessed the events in the garden of Gethsemane.

The sudden invasion of men with weapons and armor has filled with the disciples with crippling fear. Peter and the others became overwhelmed with fear for their own safety. Stampeding like frightened animals, they scurried off into the night as fast as their legs would carry them.

There was one onlooker, wrapped only in a linen cloth, that was seized hold of by the rough hands of a guard. But he managed to tear himself free, leaving the garment in the soldier's hand. **Mark 14:51 51 Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, 52 and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.**

Jesus, the captive, is now alone amongst temple guards and roman soldiers.

This morning we're going to pick up our study in verse 13 and finish the chapter,

The title of this morning's message is TRIALS, DENIALS AND DECISIONS.

Let's read verses 13-14 and then we'll pray.

**13 And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year. 14 Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.**

LETS PRAY

I want to give a word of caution before we dive into our study this morning. Most, if not all of you, are very familiar with not only this chapter, but the rest of John's gospel. You know how the events are about to play out.

Familiarity can be dangerous.

The Bible mentions the word 'heart' more than 700 times. That's because God is very concerned with our hearts.

And because of our familiarity with this section of scripture, our hearts can be less receptive to what the HS desires to teach us in our study.

So I encourage all of us to read these verses with fresh eyes this morning. Allow yourself to be captivated by the astonishment of the events that are about to unfold.

**13 And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year. SHOW PIC 1**

Jesus is about to endure a dizzying array of both religious and criminal trials.

When we take all of the gospels together, we see that Jesus this night endured six different trials. Three trials in a religious court and three stages before a Roman court.

## **JESUS' RELIGIOUS TRIALS**

Before Annas John 18:12-14, 19-24

Before Caiaphas Matt. 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54, 63-65

Before the Sanhedrin Matt. 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71

## **JESUS' CRIMINAL TRIALS**

Before Pilate Matt. 27:2, 11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38

Before Herod Antipas Luke 23:6-12

Before Pilate Matt. 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39—19:16

### CLOSE PIC 1

It's important to know this entire scene clearly violated the Jews' own system of law and justice. At least 7 glaring violations occurred regarding the arrest and trial of Jesus. **SHOW PIC 2**

1. No arrest could be made at night.
2. The time and date of the trial were illegal because it took place at night and on the eve of the Sabbath.
3. The Sanhedrin was without authority to instigate charges.
4. The charges against Jesus were changed during the trial. He was initially charged with blasphemy. When He was brought before Pilate, the charge was that Jesus was a King and did not advocate paying taxes to the Romans.
5. The court didn't meet in the regular meeting place of the Sanhedrin, as required by Jewish law.
6. Christ was not permitted a defense.
7. Under law, the Sanhedrin were not allowed to convict and put the death sentence into effect.

### CLOSE PIC 2

We need to change our definition of "not fair"!

Lets read verse 13 again

**13 And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year**

After binding Jesus, the soldiers led Him to the residence of the high priest. The precise location of this building is unknown, though the traditional site is in the southern part of old Jerusalem.

There are 2 high priests listed here. And if you've been with us in our studies in Leviticus, and Numbers, you may be wondering why?

Because of the Roman rule, the high priesthood had become a political appointment by the Roman government, and it was secured by a bidding process. They paid and bribed for the privilege of being the high priest-the political corruption was rampant. We know nothing of this today =)

Now Annas had been the high priest from the year 5 AD to 16 AD. And history tells us it was Annas who had thoroughly corrupted the priesthood.

Annas was the one who owned the booths in the temple courtyard where they sold the animals for sacrifices, where the moneychanger tables were. Remember the scene? **Matthew 21:12 12 Then Jesus went into the temple of God[fn] and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 13 And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'**

All that to say, you can be sure that Annas had heard of Jesus.

And as Annas was the patriarch of that family, he was still recognized as the power behind the office of the high priest. In fact Annas was so influential, 5 of his sons, at various times and for various periods, held the position of high priest.

At this particular time, Annas' son-in-law Caiaphas had the official Roman approval as high priest. But Annas was still considered by

the Jewish people the high priest, which is why they brought Jesus to Annas first.

Now we read of Caiaphas previously, verse 14 gives us the reminder....

14 Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. If you remember from a few months ago when we studied John 11, Caiaphas unknowingly spoke a prophecy. John 11:47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." 49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us<sup>[fn]</sup> that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish."

Caiaphas didn't realize that the verdict for Jesus was issued long ago in the halls of heaven, before time even began.

As Jesus' trials are unfolding, John's gospel shifts its focus now to Peter.

15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another<sup>[fn]</sup> disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. Most scholars believe that the other disciple mentioned here was in fact John, but in his humility, John never mentions his own name in this gospel he authored.

We're not told how John had become so well known to the high priest. Yet Jewish tradition provides a fascinating possibility. John's father, Zebedee, was a very wealthy large and successful fishing merchant.

And at the time, the story goes, that it was impossible to get fresh fish to the market in Jerusalem.

So they would salt the fish, and salted fish was one of the great delicacies. And according to the stories, there's a little coffee shop still in the old city of Jerusalem. And under this coffee shop there are arches and they'll tell to you that these arches were actually the fish market of Zebedee. And they say that he sold the salted fish to the high priest.

Now, if this were the case, as John was growing up, he probably was a delivery boy and had been there in the high priest's home many times delivering the salted fish. And this is how it is believed that John knew the high priest.

At any rate, the high priest knew John. And so, John went on into courtyard, but Peter was outside.

**16 But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in.** So picture this scene in your mind. John gets access beyond the door. John enters in, and begins to talk to this servant girl who was in charge of admittance. As John is talking to her, Peter is anxiously waiting, darting glances shooting everywhere, the traumatic events of gethsemane still fresh in his mind.

John then get's the girls approval to let Peter enter, and as the servant girl carefully studies Peters face...

**17 Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also one of this Man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."** The servant girl asks Peter, who a few minutes before had been swinging a sword, if he is not one of Jesus' disciples too.

But look carefully at verse 17 because there is a word that is so often overlooked. The word ALSO. Also means in addition too.

This 'also' means that John was already known to her as a disciple of Jesus.

It's interesting how she asks her question-she phrases her question in such a way that a negative answer will be easy, almost natural. She made it easy for Peter to say no.

Isn't this how Satan so often tempts us- making it so easy to yield to sin?

**18 Now the servants and officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves. And Peter stood with them and warmed himself.** There is a detail that is often overlooked here in verse 18, and it's the Greek word "anthrakia". It's the Greek word that for us is translated coals, or charcoal.

It will be in John 21 where we see another fire made of coals, when Jesus cooks breakfast for the apostles.

A charcoal fire doesn't generate a lot of light or heat for cold men, so those who wanted to stay warm had to stand close, almost clustered together.

Peter is now huddling with the enemies of his Lord while trying to conceal his identity.

You can picture the scene. Peter, shivering at the cold spring air and chilled at the events that have been unfolding in rapid succession. He's trying to blend into the small crowd, doing whatever he can to an unnoticed follower of Jesus Christ.

**BREAK ROOM STORY?**

Praise God the Lord can still use our failures to bring Him glory.

Folks there is no such thing as a closet Christian. You and I are called to be salt and light in this dark and fallen world.

The scene shifts back to the courtroom trials.

**19 The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine.** Annas begins to interrogate Jesus, He wants to know if Jesus is planning a revolution.

**20 Jesus answered him, “I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet,[fn] and in secret I have said nothing.** Jesus told Annas that He didn’t have a secret doctrine or teaching that would suddenly be revealed under the intimidation of interrogation.

Jesus’ teachings were out in the open, in synagogues and in the temple. And He didn’t have 2 different messages, 1 privately for His disciples and 1 for the masses-Jesus’ message was consistent.

**21 Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said.”** Jesus invited Annas to question His hearers—not just His disciples—to determine if He had indeed taught anything for which someone might accuse Him.

**22 And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, “Do You answer the high priest like that?”** Here we see Jesus was a victim of police brutality.

This anonymous officer lashes out and slaps Jesus, not realizing that the One he is striking is the One who created his ruthless hand!!

**23 Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?”** Jesus didn’t become

emotional or physical-He asks a logical question. Jesus hadn't spoken evil of Annas or even disrespected him.

24 Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. Now John does not tell us about Jesus' trial before Caiaphas, but let's read the details

Matthew 26:57 57 And those who had laid hold of Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. 58 But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest's courtyard. And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end.

59 Now the chief priests, the elders,[fn] and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, 60 but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none.[fn] But at last two false witnesses[fn] came forward 61 and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.' "

62 And the high priest arose and said to Him, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" 63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!"

64 Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

65 Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! 66 What do you think?"

They answered and said, "He is deserving of death."

67 Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, 68 saying, "Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?" Our Lord continues to endure horrendous treatment.

The scene shifts back to Peter in the courtyard...

25 Now Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Therefore they said to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?"

He denied it and said, "I am not!" Notice the dramatic difference in this chapter between Jesus and Peter.

Jesus stands up to those questioning Him and doesn't try to defend Himself or deny anything. Yet Peter is cowering and denies everything.

26 One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" This 3<sup>rd</sup> questioner of Peter was an eye-witness to the chaos in Gethsemane. This is also the one who identified Peter as a Galilean **Matthew 26:73 73 And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, "Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you."** Galileans spoke with a twang-their enunciation made for quick identification.

Peter's safety is in jeopardy. He could easily be arrested for the attempted murder of Malchus.

27 Peter then denied again; and immediately a rooster crowed. According to the Talmud, roosters were banned from Jerusalem at the time of Jesus. The priests viewed them as unclean. So it would be unusual to hear a cocka-doodle-do in Jerusalem.

Peter denied any affiliation to Jesus, and the rooster immediately crowed.

Matthew 26:75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly.

A heartbreaking scene. But praise the Lord God is not done with Peter.

The scene now shifts back to Jesus

28 Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover.

It's shocking how meticulously religious these Jewish leaders were on the outside, and how evil their hearts were on the inside. This is why earlier Jesus rebuked them:

Matthew 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

This is the danger of religion. Folks can get so wrapped up in traditions they overlook the things that matter to God. Here in verse 28 they didn't want to come into the Praetorium because they didn't want to defile themselves so they could partake in the Passover festivities.

All the while orchestrating the crucifixion of God's Son.

29 Pilate then went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" We've now moved from the Jewish trials of Jesus to His roman trials. We studied last week in verse 3 how Roman troops were used to arrest Jesus, which means the

Jewish authorities communicated something about this case to Pilate in advance. So it's surprising that in verse 29 Pilate asks what the accusations against Jesus are.

30 They answered and said to him, "If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you." Their answer is snide and full of contempt towards Pilate. They already found Jesus guilty, all they wanted Pilate to do was to pronounce the death sentence.

31 Then Pilate said to them, "You take Him and judge Him according to your law." Pause here. Pilate tried to evade responsibility and throw it back on the Jews. If they had already tried Jesus and found Him guilty, then why didn't they sentence Him according to Jewish law?

Therefore the Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death," When Rome conquered Israel, capital punishment was taken away from the Jews. Only the Romans could carry out capital punishment.

32 that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die. The Jews' acknowledgment that they couldn't put anyone to death was in harmony with the sovereign plan of God. Jesus Himself had declared that He would die by crucifixion, not by stoning. **John 12:32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.** 33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

Now we know that the Jews did stone people to death for blasphemy, but those were impromptu acts of violence rather than official legal action.

John combines the 2 appearances of Jesus before Pilate, separated by an appearance of Jesus before Herod Antipas. Pilate hoped to hand this problem to Herod because he ruled over

Galilee, where Jesus was from. Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate, and verse 33 is start of the second appearance.

33 Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” Pilate now took Jesus into the Praetorium for a private interview and asked Him point blank-“Are You the King of the Jews?”

34 Jesus answered him, “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me? 35 Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?” Pilate seems offended that Jesus would imply a personal interest in Him.

But Pilate’s answer was also an admission that he knew of no real charge against Jesus. He only knew what the rulers of the Jews had said. And Pilate’s question is a thought provoking one.

What did Jesus do?

He had healed the sick, raised the dead, fed the multitudes, calmed the winds and the waves, and taught the truth about God.

36 Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.” Jesus declared that He is a king, but not the kind of king the Jews accused Him of being.

Christ’s kingdom is not advanced by human weapons. Rather by one heart at a time.

And this is important for us to remember. **2 Corthinains 10:4** tells us **For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,**

37 Pilate therefore said to Him, “Are You a king then?” Pause here. This was Pilate’s concern. He didn’t mind religious leaders

among the Jews, as long as they kept the peace and didn't challenge the Roman kingdom.

Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Jesus boldly declared that He is truth. **John 14:6**  
**Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."**

And here, Jesus' words were an invitation for Pilate to listen to Him and to learn the truth. Incredibly, Jesus showed more interest in offering truth to Pilate than he was in defending Himself.

**38 Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?"**

And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all. Pilate's response is ripe with cynicism, implying that the truth was unknowable.

For Pilate, soldiers and armies were truth, Rome was truth, Caesar was truth, and political power was truth. Yet Pilate, like so many today, looked only at our physical world, and refused to acknowledge the spiritual realm.

Pilate then concludes that he cannot find any fault in Jesus.

Folks that is always the verdict when a person honestly examines Jesus.

So trying to satisfy the bloodthirsty Jewish crowd, Pilate comes up with an idea.

**39 "But you have a custom that I should release someone to you at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?"** We've seen the trials, we've witnessed the denials, and now we come to the decision.

40 Then they all cried again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.

Pilate looks to give the bloodthirsty Jews a substitute. The other gospels tell us that Barabbas was a militant member of a Jewish militia. He wreaked havoc against Rome, and had put the common people in harm's way. Today, Barabbas would be described as a terrorist.

It's ironic that Pilate had declared Jesus innocent of the charge of leading an insurrection, yet Barabbas was guilty of that very crime!

And the crowd is left with the choice-Jesus or Barabbas.

And the crowd chooses Barabbas.

We shudder in disbelief when we read these words. How could these men, who claimed to love God with all their heart, desire Barabbas over Jesus?

I doubt there's a Christian in America that would choose a terrorist over Jesus.

But our enemy, the devil, is much more subtle than that.

See the choices we face each day aren't that between a terrorist and Jesus, but things like spending time on Facebook and spending time with Jesus.

It's an indictment that many Christians today can quote their favorite politician or talking head, but can't seem to quote scripture.

Folks everyone of us is faced with a litany of choices each and every day. And I'm not talking about the sinful things we know not to do, I'm talking about just day to day living.

Is Jesus our priority? Because if He's not, we will look more like the world than we will look like an ambassador for Christ.

And instead of letting our light shine for Jesus for all to see, people might just have to ask us, 'are you also one of His disciples' because we've allowed our lights to dim and our salt grown flat.

And before we know it, we can find ourselves huddling by the warm fires with the enemy.

Hey it's happened to plenty of folks better than you and me!

I want to encourage you, make Jesus your priority. Listen to the bible while you're doing the laundry or washing dishes, listen to the bible in your car, or turn off the radio and just pray all this week during your commutes.

Do what you need to do, make Jesus your priority. You'll never regret it.