

John Chapter 18

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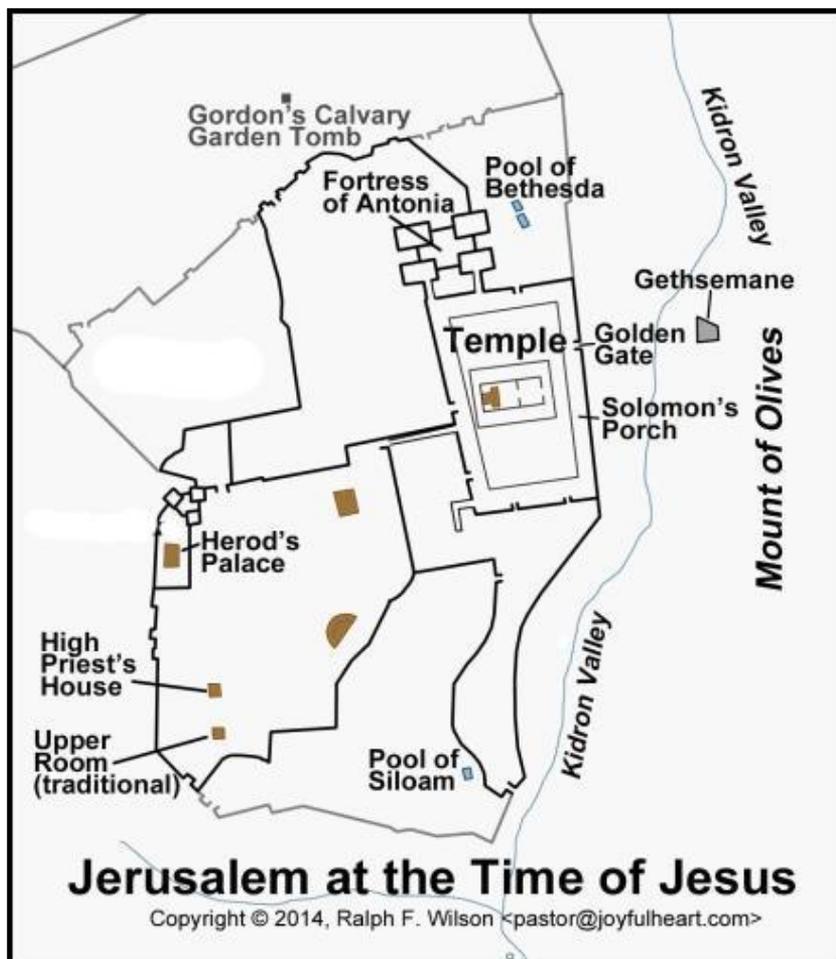
Introduction:

This chapter is about the trials of Jesus before He was crucified.

Content:

- The Arrest of Jesus
- The Trial Before Annas
- The Trial Before Caiaphas
- The Trial Before Pilate

1. Isaiah had prophesied about these event:
He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet He never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, He did not open His mouth. Unjustly condemned, He was led away. No one cared that He died without descendants, that His life was cut short in midstream. But He was struck down for the rebellion of My people. (Isaiah 53:7-8 NLT)
2. Simeon, the aged prophet, said that Jesus would be a sign spoken against and that event will now unfold in full force.
Jesus' parents were amazed at what was being said about Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby's mother, "This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, but He will be a joy to many others. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose Him. As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul." (Luke 2:33-35 NLT)
3. It is helpful to visualize the late-night travels of Jesus and His companions.



THE ARREST OF JESUS

(18:1.) After saying these things, Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley with His disciples and entered a grove of olive trees.

- The blood of animal sacrifices from the Passover ceremony drained from the Temple area into the Kidron Valley. As the party crossed the brook, it would have been red with blood, a portend of the coming sacrifice on the cross. It was a full moon that night because Passover was set to coincide with a full moon.

(2.) Judas, the betrayer, knew this place, because Jesus had often gone there with His disciples.

- The other gospel writers give the detail of **Jesus** praying, but John goes right to the arrest of **Jesus**. The traitorous **Judas** knew where **Jesus** would be. He needed to earn his blood money because he had sold the whereabouts of **Jesus** to the enemies.

(3.) The leading priests and Pharisees had given Judas a contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him. Now with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons, they arrived at the olive grove.

- **Judas** earned his money by waking up officials to arrest Jesus.
- The **guards** would have worked at the **Temple** for the ruling Sanhedrin.
- The **Pharisees** were the political group that had constant conflict with Jesus and wanted to kill Him.
- The **lanterns** and **torches** were to be sure they arrested the right person.
- The **weapons** were to assure that there would be no resistance.

(4.) Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to Him, so He stepped forward to meet them. "Who are you looking for?" He asked.

- As a true leader, **Jesus** was the aggressor. The authorities are answering His questions.

(5.) "Jesus the Nazarene," they replied. "I AM He," Jesus said. (Judas, who betrayed Him, was standing with them.)

- **Judas** would recognize His voice. John wants his readers to understand how much **Judas** was involved.

(6.) As Jesus said "I AM He," they all drew back and fell to the ground!

- Perhaps His aggressiveness, perhaps His reputation for being a miracle worker caused the arresting party to pull back and **fall**. There could be something remarkable in the voice of **Jesus**. Remember when those guards came to arrest Jesus in the temple and returned saying "Never a man so spake."
- The soldiers expected **Jesus to** attempt escape. Instead, He identified Himself.

(7.) Once more He asked them, "Who are you looking for?" And again they replied, "Jesus the Nazarene." (8.) "I told you that I AM He," Jesus said. "And since I am the One you want, let these others go."

- Jesus sought to not have His men arrested. They would become His spokesmen in less than 60 days. Notice that Jesus is still leading.

(9.) He did this to fulfill His own statement: "I did not lose a single one of those You have given Me."

- This sentence is inserted by John into the story as another evidence of who Jesus was. He quoted Himself as recorded in John 17:12. Even in a major crisis, Jesus interceded for the Eleven.

(10.) Then Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest's slave.

- **Peter** was armed and would have used his short sword earlier on Judas had he figured out what was happening at the Passover Table.
- Now Peter probably swung to cut off Malchus' *head* but this **servant** ducked and **Peter** got his **ear**. John was there and reported that it was his **right ear**. The Luke account reports that Jesus restored the ear (Luke 22:51), performing a miracle right in front of His captors.
- Mark reports that the disciples fled. (Mark 14:50)

(11.) But Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given Me?"

- Jesus is determined to let this arrest happen. It was part of the **Father's** plan. Jesus did not chide **Peter** for his concealed weapon or tell him to get rid of it.

(12.) So the soldiers, their commanding officer, and the Temple guards arrested Jesus and tied Him up.

- Under the guidance of Judas, they had their man.
- The arrestors may have thought they apprehended a vicious criminal, but Jesus had not been violent with anyone. He had healed the sick, restored sight to the blind and even raised the dead.

THE TRIAL BEFORE ANNAS

(13.) First they took Him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest at that time.

- **Annas** was the legal and proper **high priest**, but his son-in-law **Caiaphas** was alternate **high priest** because the Romans authorities could not deal with the irascible **Annas**.

(14.) Caiaphas was the one who had told the other Jewish leaders, "It's better that one man should die for the people."

- John is telling us that Jesus would be tried by those who had already decided that He should **die**. The High Priest's words had two meanings. One set he could not see.

(15.) Simon Peter followed Jesus, as did another of the disciples. That other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, so he was allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard with Jesus.

- **Peter** we know. The **other disciple** was almost certainly John, the writer of the book. He and **Peter** were often buddies and

John had business connections with the household of the high priest.

(16.) Peter had to stay outside the gate. Then the disciple who knew the high priest spoke to the woman watching at the gate, and she let Peter in.

- John had easy access to the courtyard and used that connection to have **Peter** brought in also.

(17.) The woman asked Peter, "You're not one of that man's disciples, are you?" "No," he said, "I am not."

- **The woman** watching questioned the identity of **Peter**. She may have already known that John was a **disciple**. But this brave **Peter** who was willing to die for Jesus was thinking of physical combat when he made the assertion that he was willing to go to death. He had not reckoned the power of social pressure.

(18.) Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself.

- The support team built a fire in the courtyard because it was chilly. **Peter** was right there to enjoy the relief from the **cold**.
- John reports that it was a **charcoal fire**. It would have a distinctive fragrance. The only other place John uses the term **charcoal fire** is later when Jesus prepared breakfast for His fishing disciples. That would have reminded Peter of the courtyard event and Jesus pursued that subject with him.

(19.) Inside, the high priest began asking Jesus about His followers and what He had been teaching them.

- It is not normal for a judge to question the defendant with a view of finding him guilty. Jesus did not discuss His **disciples** because He was protecting them. But He commented on His **teaching**.

(20.) Jesus replied, "Everyone knows what I teach. I have preached regularly in the synagogues and the Temple, where the people gather. I have not spoken in secret.

- **Jesus** has been totally transparent in His public teaching, both in local **synagogues** and in the **Temple** itself.

(21.) Why are you asking Me this question? Ask those who heard Me. They know what I said."

- Why is the judge asking the accused? Ask some witnesses who were present and listening. In other words, the court needs some evidence. Get some witnesses.

(22.) Then one of the Temple guards standing nearby slapped Jesus across the face. "Is that the way to answer the high priest?" he demanded.

- **Jesus** answered Annas with a question. This annoyed the officer on duty and he **slapped** the prisoner.

(23.) Jesus replied, "If I said anything wrong, you must prove it. But if I'm speaking the truth, why are you beating Me?"

- To this, Jesus asked for evidence that He was **wrong** or to answer why the officer struck Him. While **Jesus** had not permitted a violent physical response when He was being arrested, He did respond with words that put His accusers on the spot.

THE TRIAL BEFORE CAIAPHAS

(24.) Then Annas bound Jesus and sent Him to Caiaphas, the high priest.

- **Annas** could not handle this prisoner, so he sent Him nearby to his son-in-law **Caiaphas**. Now, back to the story of Peter.

(25.) Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, they asked Him again, "You're not one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "No, I am not."

- This is the second time that **Peter** has **denied** being a **disciple** of Jesus.

(26.) But one of the household slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?"

- A relative of Malchus asked if he hadn't seen **Peter** at the scene where Jesus was arrested. Peter lacked courage.

(27.) Again Peter denied it. And immediately a rooster crowed.

- This third denial happened just before a **rooster crowed**, reminding Peter of what Jesus had said a few hours before.
- The other gospel accounts tell of yet other trials.
- **Paul Butler** writes:

Jesus was tried illegally at night; His arrest came by bribery; He was forced to testify against Himself; He was sentenced the very same night which was illegal; He was coerced and beaten during the trial but the most atrocious part of the trial was the prejudice, bigotry and malice aforethought of the judges.

THE TRIAL BEFORE THE ROMAN GOVERNOR

(28.) Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then He was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor. His accusers didn't go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover.

- This is the **headquarters** of Pilate, the man assigned to rule Judea on behalf of Caesar who ruled from Rome.
- This group of Jewish leaders did not want to **defile** themselves by going into the **headquarters** of the **governor**. If they should enter any place where the Roman eagle was on its standard they would have been, according to their tradition, ceremonially unclean. They would not mind that they were defiling themselves and the nation by illegally calling for the death of the best person who had ever lived.

- The **Passover** meal had already been eaten, but the word was also used to refer to the entire seven-day festival and this must be the sense in which it is used here.

(29.) So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, "What is your charge against this man?"

- **Pilate** did as was expected and asked about the accusation.

(30.) "We wouldn't have handed Him over to you if He weren't a criminal!" they retorted.

- The Jewish leaders tried to get Pilate to simply accept their verdict that had been settled before they even tried Jesus. They demanded a rubber stamp death warrant.

(31.) "Then take Him away and judge Him by your own law," Pilate told them. "Only the Romans are permitted to execute someone," the Jewish leaders replied.

- **Pilate** did not understand Jewish **law** and told the accusers to handle the case themselves. But the Jewish court could not impose the death penalty and that is why they had come to **Pilate**.

(32.) (This fulfilled Jesus' prediction about the way He would die.)

- Notice that if Jesus were to die at the hands of a Jewish court, then He would have been stoned because that was the way they administered the death penalty. But He had predicted that He would be lifted up:

And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up . . . (John 3:14 NLT)

And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to Myself. He said this to indicate how He was going to die. (John 12:32-33 NLT)

Because the Roman government administered the death penalty by crucifixion, Jesus would indeed be lifted up—on a cross.

(33.) Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. "Are You the king of the Jews?" he asked Him.

- **Pilate** did not hesitate inviting Jesus inside of his **headquarters** and **Jesus** did not hesitate to enter.
- **Pilate** was not concerned about matters of the Jewish religion, but being a **king** is a political charge and may affect governor **Pilate**.

(34.) Jesus replied, "Is this your own question, or did others tell you about Me?"

- Jesus hinted that the question did not come from Pilate's research, but that it was a rumor from the Jewish leadership.

(35.) "Am I a Jew?" Pilate retorted. "Your own people and their leading priests brought You to me for trial. Why? What have You done?"

- **James Smith** writes:
 Pilate was a Roman judge. He could not and would not get bogged down in enforcing the minutia of Jewish law. Pilate had concluded that Jesus must have done something noteworthy to incur the wrath of the Pharisees and chief priest. He wanted Jesus to admit what it was that had so angered the religious authorities.
- We have another case of the judge asking the accused for information so He could be tried.

(36.) Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, My followers would fight to keep Me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But My Kingdom is not of this world."

- The question gave **Jesus** a platform for explaining His **kingdom**:
 - It was not an **earthly kingdom** and so His **followers** would not be using force.
 - The evidence was that His **followers** did not fight to keep Jesus from being delivered to the **Jews**.
 - The **kingdom** of **Jesus** would not be a threat to Pilate or his employer, the Roman government.

(37.) Pilate said, "So You are a king?" Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true."

- **Pilate** had a one-dimension view of life and could not accept that **Jesus** came from another place—heaven. Jesus says that being a **king** is His very purpose in being alive. What He says is **truth**.

(38.) "What is truth?" Pilate asked. Then he went out again to the people and told them, "He is not guilty of any crime."

- Pilate did not see **truth** as fixed and set while Jesus did and does.
- **Truth** is:
 - that which corresponds with reality.
 - that which matches its object.
 - simply telling it like it is.
- **Truth** is not:
 - what makes people feel good. Unfortunately, bad news can be true.
 - what the majority says is true. Fifty-one percent of a group can reach a wrong conclusion.
 - defined by what is intended. Good intentions can still be wrong.
 - *how* we know; truth is *what* we know.
 - simply what is believed. A lie believed is still a lie.

(39.) But you have a custom of asking me to release one prisoner each year at Passover. Would you like me to release this 'King of the Jews'?"

- The politician was in a vise. If he released Jesus he would greatly anger his Jewish constituents. If he ordered Jesus put to death, it would violate his sense of justice because he could not find any guilt in the man.
- He tried to work a custom to his advantage and get them to release Jesus because it was **Passover** time.

(40.) But they shouted back, "No! Not this man. We want Barabbas!" (Barabbas was a revolutionary.)

- The accusers would have none of Pilate's offer. They wanted the blood of Jesus and didn't care if they had to release a known criminal to get it.