

John 18

Leaving the Upper Room, Jesus and His disciples went out into the full moon of the Passover, and made their way through the streets of Jerusalem and out the east gate. They crossed the Kedron valley, to the garden of Gethsemane, about a half mile from the city walls, near the base of the Mount of Olivet. Gethsemane or orchard, takes its name from a word meaning oil press, of the olive trees. Today there are giant olive trees, no doubt the descendants of those under the shade of which Jesus rested. Here the Lord endured the Agony of the Garden, recorded in the words, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Immediately after this is the appearance of the band led by Judas. This is the only night of the life of Jesus that we can trace. We see first, the Passover in the upper room, then the washing of feet, the exposure of Judas, the warning to Peter, the tender discourses to the disciples, the agony at Gethsemane, the betrayal, the arrest, the trial before the Sanhedrin, the trial before Pilate, the scourging and on and on we shall study.

John 18:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.

The eleven apostles were with Jesus when he left the Upper Room. The brook Kedron, the name means the *black torrent* which it was during the rainy season. John does not give the name, but all the other writers designate it. Gethsemane which means "oil-press."

John 18:2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oft times resorted thither with his disciples.

The movement of Judas, after the Last Supper is obvious. He rushed to cash in on the deal he had previously made with the chief priests cf:

Matthew 26:14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, **26:15** And said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. **26:16** And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him

Going immediately to Caiaphas, or to some other leading member of the Sanhedrin, he informs him where Jesus is. It was not their plan to arrest Christ during the feast, because they feared a popular revolt cf:

Matthew 26:4-5 And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill *him*. **26:5** But they said, Not on the feast *day*, lest there be an uproar among the people.

But, now here was an opportunity offered of seizing Him secretly in the dead of night, when all were asleep or engaged at the paschal meal, therefore His enemies did not hesitate for Judas knew the place.

John 18:3 Judas then, having received a band *of men* and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

The multitude, guided by Judas, is described by Mark as "great." It consisted (1) of *the band* (John 18:3, 12), or Roman cohort, which, consisted of 300 to 600 men, which was quartered in the tower of Antonia, overlooking the temple. They were ever ready to put down any revolt or arrest any disturber. Probably the duty squad of the band or as many as could be spared who were sent. (2) There were also *the captains of the temple* (Luke 22:52), with their men, who guarded the temple and kept order. (3) Some of the *chief priests and elders* (Luke 22:52). (4) And, finally, their servants, such as Mal-ch-us.

John 18:4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

Jesus submitted to them of his own free will. Whom seek ye? Jesus "went forth" probably from the shadow of the trees into the moonlight.

John 18:5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am *he*. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

Notice "he" is an italicized word not found in the original Greek. This is another I AM verse where Jesus claims to be the God who appeared to Moses in the burning bush.

John 18:6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am *he*, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Judas, also, which betrayed him, stood with them. To the Lord's question, his foes replying that they sought Jesus of Nazareth, He calmly replied, "I am He." Then follows a scene designed to show all the world that the Lord laid down His own life freely. His enemies were powerless in His hands. As He answers them,

either His majesty or their own terror so impressed them, that, they startled fell backward to the earth. Then the Lord submitted Himself as Isaiah says cf:

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Jesus power is not again exerted until He rises from the tomb, except to heal the smitten servant of the high priest. The other Gospel writers mention, what John omits, that Judas betrayed the Lord with a kiss cf:

Mar 14:44-45 And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead *him* away safely. 14:45 And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him.

John 18:7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

John 18:8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am *he*: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

John 18:9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

Jesus again asks whom they seek, adding that, if their object is to take him, they should let his disciples go. The fulfilled saying was in His Prayer in the previous chapter:

John 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

John 18:10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

We learn from Luke that they were hardly a revolutionary band for there were but two swords in the whole company of the twelve.

Luke 22:38 And they said, Lord, behold, here *are* two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

One of these naturally was in Peter's possession, as being the foremost of the whole band. This servant of the High Priest was probably the first that was daring to lay his hands upon the Lord.

John 18:11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

Matthew's account is fuller cf:

Matthew 26:51-53 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out *his* hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. 26:52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. 26:53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

There is no possibility of advancing Christ's kingdom in such worldly ways, by force. The Kingdom of God was prophesied to be a peaceful Kingdom cf:

Isaiah 2:4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

All the violent nature of men will be changed in this new Peaceful Kingdom cf:

Isa 11:6-9 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. 11:7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 11:8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. 11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

John 18:12 Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him

Then the band, and the captain and officers of the Jews, took Jesus and bound him. Then Mark says the disciples cf:

Mark 14:50 And they all forsook him, and fled.

While they were binding him the disciples had an opportunity to escape.

John 18:13 And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.

The actual high priest at the time was Caiaphas; but this Annas had been high priest, and as such enjoyed the title by courtesy.

Luke 3:2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness

John 18:14 Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

Caiaphas had already committed himself to the policy of murder cf:

John 11:49-50 And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, 11:50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

He was appointed high priest by the Roman procurator about 27 A. D., held the office during the whole administration of Pilate. He was deposed 36 or 37 A. D. Both Annas and Caiaphas were creatures of the Roman court; both were Sadducees; both, were openly infidel concerning some of the fundamental truths of the Hebrew faith.

We have Learned

- 1. It is not strange that some bad professors creep into the church, since one in twelve, of Christ's own disciples, was false. The church can still prosper in spite of some unworthy members.**
- 2. We see the power-less-ness of a mere good example to save men. No one ever lived in better company than Judas.**

THE TRIAL BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST

"Reading the Gospels side by side, we will, see how everything they tell us falls accurately into its proper position in the general narrative. We soon perceive that of the three successive trials which our Lord underwent at the hands of the

Jews, the first--that before Annas--is related to us by John; the second--that before Caiaphas--by Matthew and Mark; the third--that before the Sanhedrim--by Luke alone.

John 18:15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and *so did* another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

Simon Peter followed Jesus, and another disciple.

At the time of the seizure of Christ all the apostles fled in panic

Matthew 26:56 But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

But in a short time some of them recovered and followed

Matthew 26:58 But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

John 18:16 But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

The damsel who kept the door, for it was a common Jewish custom to have female porters, seeing that Peter was a stranger, refused to admit him. John went in, evidently expecting Peter to follow, but when he did not, returned and spoke to the maid, who at once, allowed him to pass, John being an acquaintance.

John 18:17 Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also *one* of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.

Art thou not also one of this man's disciples? John was known to the maid as a disciple of Christ. The maid, fancying that Peter was another, from his acquaintance with John, asked the question. There was no occasion for Peter to deny, but from sudden fear he said, "I am not."

John 18:18 And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

They were in the court or inner open space around which the building was constructed, and where the fire was built on the pavement. This would be within the building, but outside of the rooms.

Matthew 26:71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

John 18:19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.

John, therefore, gives an account of the informal examination by this great dignitary which he personally witnessed and which is omitted in the other Gospels.

Annas had now conducted his informal trial, decided upon the case, and delivered over the prisoner, "bound," for official investigation. The next investigation, which is described by Matthew and Mark, was not conducted by the whole Sanhedrim, but a portion. The Jewish writers speak of three Sanhedrims, of which two were, committees of the Sanhedrin, twenty-three members being required for a meeting. On the other hand, Luke records the meeting of the great body, the whole Sanhedrim, at dawn of the day (Luke 22:66), since, according to Jewish writers, it could not condemn a man to death at night. The high priest's examination of Jesus was in the hope that he could extort some admission on which a charge could be framed.

John 18:20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.

John 18:21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

The Lord ignores the question concerning his disciples, He had entered into no conspiracies, as Annas himself had done; all his life. Jesus teaching could be learned by inquiry witness.

John 18:22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?

This is the first blow that was laid upon him "by whose stripes we are healed." The word rendered "palm of his hand" is "rod" in the Greek.

Micah 5:1-2 Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. **5:2** But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting

John 18:23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?

Observe the calmness and dignity of the reply. Paul, under similar circumstances (**Acts 23:3**), answers like a man, but Christ, like the Son of God. If there was evil in the words just spoken, let it be pointed out; but if not, to smite Him was a crime.

John 18:24 Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.

John 18:25 And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also *one* of his disciples? He denied *it*, and said, I am not.

This is Peter's second denial.

John 18:26 One of the servants of the high priest, being *his* kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?

There is no mention of where the third denial occurred.

John 18:27 Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

Immediately the cock crew.

Matthew gives us more information cf:

Matthew 26:74 Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.

As the oaths were on the lips of Peter who had declared that he would die for the Master, the cock crew to herald the approach of day. At that very moment the Lord, turned and looked on Peter with a look that pierced his soul. Peter went out into the night, like Judas; broken down, however, by repentance instead of remorse, and "wept bitterly"

Matthew 26:75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

Following this, at dawn of day, the Savior was tried before Sanhedrim, as related in:

Luke 22:66-71 And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, **22:67** Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: **22:68** And if I also ask *you*, ye will not answer me, nor let *me* go. **22:69** Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. **22:70** Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. **22:71** And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

As all attempts to prove him guilty of some crime or violation of the law had failed, in spite of false witnesses, He was called upon to answer, and upon his affirmation of His divine majesty, they condemned Him to die as guilty of blasphemy. To carry the sentence into effect the approval of the Roman governor was needful. Hence, their prisoner is next sent to Pilate.

From the accounts of the trial before the Sanhedrin, given more fully by the other Evangelists, we learn clearly the ground of condemnation.

Mark 14:61-62 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? **14:62** And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

These facts are all consistent with his Son-ship, His real Divinity, but are incapable of explanation if he was less than the Son of God.

CHRIST BEFORE PILATE.

John only, gives the detailed account of the private examinations of Jesus by Pilate during the trial recorded in John 18:33-37. He probably went within Pilate's palace as he would not be deterred by the scruples of the Jews, having eaten his passover, and he was therefore a personal witness.

The transference of the trial from the Sanhedrin to the "judgment seat" of Pontius Pilate was made necessary by the political condition of Judea. Because the Jews were a conquered nation by the Romans, the Jewish courts were permitted to try and to punish minor offenses, but the final judgment of all capital offenses was reserved for the Roman tribunals. Hence, early upon that Friday morning, the priests and great dignitaries of Israel were assembled before the hated judgment seat of Pilate, a building they could not enter at this time without defilement. No Jew was permitted, during the Passover week to enter any house that had not been purged of leaven, under the penalty of death, and this would, of course, exclude them from all buildings occupied by Gentiles. Though the rulers could trample the law of justice concerning murder they were scrupulous in observing the ceremonial law.

John 18:28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.

These Jewish leaders, filled with the hate of Christ, and ready to secure His judicial murder by the any means, were yet so scrupulous that they would not enter the house of a Gentile lest "they should be defiled" cf:

Deuteonomy 16:4 And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days; neither shall there *any thing* of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning.

So that they would not be able to eat the Passover. The Pharisees held that contact with a Gentile, or to enter his house was a source of defilement. Hence, this deputation of the Sanhedrim waited without to conduct their business in fulfillment of prophecy, what prophecy ? cf:

Psalm 22:1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*

Psalm 22:16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

Psalm 22:29 All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

Men can be very religious and yet great sinners.

John 18:29 Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?

As a detachment of Roman soldiers had been furnished to assist in the arrest, he probably knew already that they regarded the prisoner an evil doer, but he did not know what the specific charges were.

John 18:30 They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.

Their reply shows that they had hoped that Pilate would take their verdict that Jesus was a malefactor, worthy of death, and would send Him to death without a trial. They had condemned Jesus to death on the charge of blasphemy, because He declared that He was the Christ, the Son of God, but they knew well that Pilate would be indifferent to a charge of this kind. Such a claim on the part of Jesus would be no offence against the Roman law.

John 18:31 Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:

They had judged and condemned according to their own law and Pilate, on their refusal to state their charges, bade them proceed according to their own laws. They answered that this could not be done for "it was not lawful for them to put any man to death." The Roman laws forbade it. The power of life and death had been taken away from them as a subject people.

John 18:32 That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

Had the Jews been allowed to put Christ to death, he would have been stoned, as Stephen was, by a mob in Jerusalem, stoning being the usual Jewish method of execution, but he had "signified what death he should die"

John 12:32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me.

Matthew 20:18-19 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, 20:19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify *him*; and the third day he shall rise again.

John 18:33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

Before Pilate returned into the judgment hall, where Jesus had been taken, the Jews had made a formal charge that must demand the attention of Pilate. The charge that Jesus was aiming at the sovereignty of Judea and seeking to overturn the Roman government cf:

Luke 23:1-2 And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. 23:2 And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.

These charges were well adapted to perplex Pilate. Jesus did claim that He would establish a kingdom and had come into the world to be a King; He had a few days before entered Jerusalem, hailed by the crowd as King of the Jews at His triumphal entry.

John 18:34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

This question of Jesus is not for information, but it strikes right at the merits of the charge. Who made it? Did any Roman ever see me breaking the Roman laws? This question of Jesus is not for information, but it strikes right at the merits of the charge.

John 18:35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

Pilate comprehends the point, for he exclaims at once, "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me." That disproves their charge. But what hast thou done?

John 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Jesus did not hesitate to relieve the honest perplexity of Pilate; Christ's Kingdom was heavenly in its origin.

Christ's kingdom is supernatural, not of human origin. It is in the world but not worldly.

It is maintained, not by carnal weapons, but by spiritual and moral means. All attempts to propagate Christianity by the sword are prohibited.

John 18:37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

If Christ has a kingdom he must be a King. Some commentators have thought that Pilate asked this question in contempt of the poor, bound prisoner that was before him, but the gravity of the answer of Jesus shows that it was sincerely asked. Hence he declares that he had come into the world to be a King, that he was a King, and that all who were under the influence of the truth would hear His voice.

John 18:38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault *at all*.

What is truth? Pilate's inquiry was not answered in words, but Truth stood embodied and bound before him. It is evident that he was profoundly impressed, for at once he stepped out of the hall to the street, where the priests were waiting, and declared, I find in Him no fault at all.

John 18:39 But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

Jesus was accused of treason against the Roman emperor; Pilate declared that he was not guilty; the priests then accused Pilate of not being Cæsar's friend, intimating that they would accuse him to Cæsar. Had he been accused of letting a man go who claimed to be King of the Jews it would have looked bad to Caesar.

Still Pilate is against being used as the instrument of the murder of Jesus. He hopes the Jews that the Jews will accept a pardon of Jesus on account of the Passover. The custom had arisen of previous Roman governors to pardon one prisoner who had offended Roman authority. There were only two such prisoners of note in Pilate's custody. One was Barabbas, a man who had been engaged in sedition in Jerusalem as the leader of a band of robbers, and a murderer; who was probably a Revolutionary Zealot and the other was Jesus, of whom he had said: "I find in him no fault at all."

John 18:40 Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

Pilate had not named Barabbas, but they, in their anxiety to reject Christ, at once name him. The people were stimulated to this choice by the bitter hatred of the priests. It is remarkable that this man Barabbas was guilty of the very crime with which the priests and rulers had falsely charged Jesus--that of sedition; and no plainer proof of their hypocrisy could be given to the watchful Pilate than their efforts to release the former and condemn the latter.

We Have Learned

1. The practical, question for every person, is that which confronted Pilate, *What shall I do with Christ?*

Everyone comes

Pilate's hour, when he must make a decision.

2. The Jews carried Jesus to Pilate "because it was not lawful for them to put any man to death." That proved that the "scepter (power) had departed from Judah." And it was also proof that Shiloh had come, cf:

Genesis 49:10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

Sources: KJV, e-Sword, Clarke's Commentary, and B.W. Johnson Commentary.