

John 18:1-40

Arrest, Denial & Trials

What do we know about the olive grove mentioned in verse 1? It is the Garden of Gethsemane. It is interesting that John leaves out the anguished prayer of Jesus mentioned in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22.

Judas knows where Jesus will be based on past experience. The fact that Jesus doesn't choose a more secretive/unpredictable place—what does that tell us? Jesus is not trying to avoid being arrested. He is ready to turn Himself in. He knows His time has come. Jesus is not “arrested” at all. He willingly gives Himself up when the time is right. He is in control at all times.

There are officials from the chief priests and Pharisees and a detachment of Roman troops (a detachment is usually around 200 soldiers) sent to arrest Jesus. What does that tell you about the perspective of the Jewish leaders that they would send such an entourage to arrest one man? They are expecting to encounter significant resistance. They want to be sure that Jesus will not escape. They know of the power and elusiveness of Jesus as seen in John 7:30, 8:20, 8:59, and Luke 4:30.

Why does this crowd sent to arrest Jesus fall to the ground when He speaks? Power of Word of God. The “I AM” of verse 5 is the same “I AM” as in Exodus 3:14.

Why does Jesus request that His men be let go? Jesus is intent on protecting His disciples. They have an vital mission ahead.

What is the prophecy about in verse 9? Jesus is fulfilling His own prophecy recorded in John 6:39: “And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.”

What does Peter's action of striking the high priest's servant tell us about Peter? This is an impulsive attempt to protect Jesus. His action is foolish, but it illustrates his character qualities of courage, devotion, loyalty, and commitment to Jesus.

Note: Peter's brave—though misdirected—act shows that he still fails to realize that Jesus' death is a necessary part of God's plan. Zeal without knowledge can be dangerous. Therefore Jesus rebukes Peter even though he shows remarkable loyalty to his teacher.

What does “drink the cup” mean in verse 11? The cup Jesus is talking about is the cup of God's wrath—punishment for the sins of all people. By becoming sin for us, the Son is exposed to the wrath of the Father.

Who is “another disciple”? We don't know. Traditionally commentators have understood the “other disciple” to have been John, the “beloved disciple.”

Why does Peter deny Christ? It is not Peter's faith that fails, but his courage. He is unwilling to stand up in the face of adversity and claim to be a follower of Christ. After his failure he weeps bitterly, because he really does love his Lord.

Application: **Have you ever denied Christ?** If so, God can restore and use you just like He did with Peter.

What is not right about the trials of Jesus? Two independent witnesses are required before a person could go to trial. Defense has to speak first. No trials are allowed after dark. The Jews violate their own laws they are so intent/focused/obsessed on killing Jesus.

Who is Annas? At one time, Annas had been high priest. He was supposed to serve until he died, and then his son would replace him. So you have to wonder why was he still alive? The historian Josephus tells us that in 14 A.D., after Annas had been the high priest for seven years, the Roman Valerius Gratus basically fired him. In the next 11 years, there were three high priests, appointed and fired at the whim of the Roman government. Finally, in 25 A.D., Caiaphas became the high priest. Throughout these years, many of the Jews continued to recognize Annas as their true high priest. That's why Jesus was led to Annas first.

Note: John's version of Peter's denial is quite similar to those of the other Gospels but His record of Jesus' interrogation by Annas is unique. None of the other Gospel writers mentioned it.

Annas probably asked Jesus about His disciples to ascertain the size of His following due to His ever increasing popularity which was a threat to the religious establishment's power. His interest in Jesus' teachings undoubtedly revolved around who Jesus claimed to be.

How did Jesus respond to Annas' questioning? Jesus affirmed that He had always taught openly. He had not promoted sedition secretly. He had no secret teaching to hide. He was assuring Annas that His teachings were not subversive. He invited Annas to question His hearers—not just His disciples—to determine if He had indeed taught anything for which someone might accuse Him of being disloyal. The testimony of witnesses was an indispensable part of any serious trial in Judaism.

How did Jesus respond to the blow to His face? Jesus' response to this attack was logical rather than emotional or physical. He simply appealed for a fair trial. Jesus had shown no disrespect for Annas.

Why did Annas send Jesus to Caiaphas? Annas could not find anything the Sanhedrin could use to condemn or even charge Jesus. Caiaphas had to interview Jesus to bring charges against Him before the Sanhedrin since Caiaphas was the current official high priest.

What have we heard Caiaphas say about Jesus earlier in John? He prophesied the death of Christ for the Jewish nation in John 11:49-52 "Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one."

Note: In verses 19-27 John has constructed a dramatic contrast wherein Jesus stands up to His questioners and denies nothing, while Peter cowers before his questioners and denies everything.

Why do the Jews take Jesus to Pilate? They need Roman permission to execute Jesus. The other Gospels emphasize Jesus' trials before the Jewish Sanhedrin. John emphasizes Jesus' trial before the Roman authority—Pontius Pilate.

Note: With great irony, in verse 28, John exposes the hypocrisy of the priests. They will murder an innocent Jesus, yet they are afraid of ceremonial defilement.

Note: Though Jesus is a king, He is not a political rival or threat in the sense Pilate thought. Pilate may have been relieved at Jesus' answer that His kingdom was not of this world. Pilate is trying to determine if Jesus is an insurrectionist who would threaten his position as governor if he can't keep the peace among the Jews. Pilate is not concerned about the Jews—only himself.

What is truth?

- To Pilate: armies, soldiers, power, Rome, politics, etc.
- To Jesus: God's plan for mankind. Jesus' role in offering salvation.
- To the world: today there is a generation of adults who have been raised to believe that there is no absolute truth. They have been taught that what's true for you isn't necessarily true for them. They have been taught that there are many truths, and that you simply need to pick which one you believe is truth, and then it's true for you.

Application: What is truth in your life? How does it affect the way you live—or what you would die for?

According to verse 40, if any one man could say, "Jesus died for me," who would it be? Barabbas. He knew what it was to have Jesus die on his behalf. Jesus took his place on death row. Barabbas was set free so Jesus could die—the innocent for the guilty.

Why are the Jews engaging the Roman judicial system? Why not just kill Jesus? Why is it important to have Jesus killed by the Romans instead of by the Jews? The Messiah has to die by crucifixion.

- The Word of God specifically dictates what kind of death the Messiah was going to die (John 3:14, 8:28, and 12:32-34).
- Isaiah 53:5 and Zechariah 12:10 said that He has to be pierced through.
- Psalm 22:16 says that it was specifically His hands and feet that would be pierced.
- If the Jews had been allowed to kill Him, they would have stoned Him instead of crucified Him, and the prophecies about His death would not have been fulfilled.

Why is it important to the Jews to have Jesus killed on a cross? The Jews equate crucifixion with hanging and anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse (Deuteronomy 21:23). To the Jews, stoning might make Jesus appear to be a martyred prophet but hanging/crucifixion would prove that God had rejected/cursed Him.

Bottom Line: God has a plan. He is driving the plan. God is orchestrating it, and it will not be thwarted by man.

MEMORIZE: John 18:37