

## John 18:1 – 19:16

<sup>18:1</sup> When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which he entered with his disciples. <sup>2</sup> Now Judas also, who was betraying him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with his disciples. <sup>3</sup> Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. <sup>4</sup> So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon him, went forth and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’ <sup>5</sup> They answered him, ‘Jesus the Nazarene.’ He said to them, ‘I am.’ And Judas also, who was betraying him, was standing with them. <sup>6</sup> So when he said to them, ‘I am,’ they drew back and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup> Therefore he again asked them, ‘Whom do you seek?’ And they said, ‘Jesus the Nazarene.’ <sup>8</sup> Jesus answered, ‘I told you that I am; so if you seek me, let these go their way,’ <sup>9</sup> to fulfill the word which he spoke, ‘Of those whom You have given me I lost not one.’ <sup>10</sup> Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave’s name was Malchus. <sup>11</sup> So Jesus said to Peter, ‘Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?’ <sup>12</sup> So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound him, <sup>13</sup> and led him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. <sup>14</sup> Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people. <sup>15</sup> Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, <sup>16</sup> but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. <sup>17</sup> Then the slave-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.’ <sup>18</sup> Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself. <sup>19</sup> The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples, and about his teaching. <sup>20</sup> Jesus answered him, ‘I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. <sup>21</sup> Why do you question me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said.’ <sup>22</sup> When he had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, ‘Is that the way you answer the high priest?’ <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, ‘If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike me?’ <sup>24</sup> So Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. <sup>25</sup> Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, ‘You are not also one of his disciples, are you?’ He denied it, and said, ‘I am not.’ <sup>26</sup> One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, ‘Did I not see you in the garden with him?’ <sup>27</sup> Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

<sup>18:28</sup> Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. <sup>29</sup> Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, ‘What accusation do you bring against this Man?’ <sup>30</sup> They answered and said to him, ‘If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered him to you.’ <sup>31</sup> So Pilate said to them, ‘Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law.’ The Jews said to him, ‘We are not permitted to put anyone to death,’ <sup>32</sup> to fulfill the word of Jesus which he spoke, signifying by what kind of death he was about to die. <sup>33</sup> Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, ‘Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about me?’ <sup>35</sup> Pilate answered, ‘I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered you to me; what have you done?’ <sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not [from] this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, my kingdom is not of this realm.’ <sup>37</sup> Therefore Pilate said to him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.’ <sup>38</sup> 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 guilt in him. <sup>39</sup> But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?’ <sup>40</sup> So they cried out again, saying, ‘Not this Man, but Barabbas.’ Now Barabbas was a robber. <sup>19:1</sup> Pilate then took Jesus and scourged him. <sup>2</sup> And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and put a purple robe on him; <sup>3</sup> and they began to come up to him and say, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ and to give him slaps in the face. <sup>4</sup> Pilate came out again and said to them, ‘Behold, I am bringing him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in him.’ <sup>5</sup> Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, ‘Behold, the Man!’ <sup>6</sup> So when the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out saying, ‘Crucify, crucify!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him.’ <sup>7</sup> The Jews answered him, ‘We have a law, and by that law he ought to die because he made himself out to be the Son of God.’ <sup>8</sup> Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; <sup>9</sup> and he entered into the Praetorium again

and said to Jesus, 'Where are you from?' But Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup> So Pilate said to him, 'You do not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you, and I have authority to crucify you?' <sup>11</sup> Jesus answered, 'You would have no authority over me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered me to you has the greater sin.' <sup>12</sup> As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release him, but the Jews cried out saying, 'If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.' <sup>13</sup> Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. <sup>14</sup> Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, 'Behold, your King!' <sup>15</sup> So they cried out, 'Away with him, away with him, crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar.' <sup>16</sup> So he then handed him over to them to be crucified.

#### Historical and Cultural Background

- *The Garden*: The garden of Gethsemane was on the Mount of Olives, just to the west of Jerusalem. The garden was partway up the Mount of Olives, and overlooked the small Kidron Valley and the western wall of Jerusalem. A narrow path went from the western wall through the Kidron Valley to the garden of Gethsemane. So Jesus would have seen everyone coming towards him.
- *Passover*: The Jewish Independence Day, the anniversary of God liberating Israel out from slavery in Egypt. Yet Israel had been conquered and/or occupied by Babylon (586 BC), Persia (516 BC), Greece (332 BC), and finally Rome (63 BC). So Passover stirred Jewish hopes for liberation, and agitation was in the air. Every year, the Jewish people said, 'We have no king but God.' Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, compares Jesus to a Jewish revolutionary leader called Barabbas whom he had recently taken prisoner.
- *The Jewish Leadership*: The Jewish leaders were nervous about Jesus, since he was making claims to be the Messianic King, who most people expected to be a military revolutionary. Jewish leaders had struck a power balance with the Roman Imperial powers. Everyone feared an uprising. Annas was 'the godfather' of the city; by Jewish Law, high priests were chosen for life, but Roman governors interfered and forced a change-over; Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was nominally 'high priest' for that year.

Part 1: Jesus' Trial and Simon Peter's Trial, John 18:1 – 27

Part 2: Jesus' Trial, the Chief Priests' Trial, and Pilate's Trial, John 18:28 – 19:16

Part 1: Jesus' Trial and Simon Peter's Trial, John 18:1 – 27

1. What observations and questions do you have about 18:1 – 27?
2. Let's explore what this was like for Jesus, starting from the garden.
  - a. What did Jesus see as they came? At night, they would have taken the windy path through the Kidron Valley, coming with torches and lanterns. It would have looked like a fiery serpent with Judas Iscariot at the head. Satan is coming to strike Jesus, who steps out of the garden to be struck.
  - b. The garden scene as archetype, recalls the garden of Eden when humanity fell. But now, Jesus is stepping out of the garden to be struck by humanity, and to redeem all humanity.
  - c. Why did the soldiers fall back when Jesus said, 'I am he'? It's probably because of a superstition about how the spoken name of a god could call down power. Jewish oral tradition also said that Pharaoh fell back when Moses said the name of God. 'I AM' is the name of God. The word 'he' is added by the translators so that it appears grammatically right. But the Greek only has 'I AM.' Jesus could have run away at this point. King David did long ago (2 Samuel 15:30) when he was fleeing from Absalom.
  - d. What does this tell us about Jesus, that he goes willingly? How many different opportunities did Jesus have to escape?
  - e. What do you think about Peter's response?
3. So the fiery serpent has coiled around Jesus and drawn him out of the garden. Let's explore what happens next.
  - a. Who is Annas? The real power broker. His four sons had been high priest before Caiaphas. Normally, the Jewish high priest held that office for life. But the Romans interfered and required a changeover. The high priest only held the office for 1 year. Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas and was technically 'high priest' that year. But everyone knew Annas was the real power. Kind of like Joseph Kennedy, father of Joe Jr., JFK, RFK, and Teddy.
  - b. What challenge does Jesus cause for Annas?
  - c. While Jesus is on trial, what is Annas looking for? Someone to testify about what he had taught. Simon Peter could have testified.
4. What about Peter now?
  - a. What crisis does Jesus cause for Peter?
  - b. Why does Peter follow secretly? Where does that get him?
  - c. Notice that the phrase 'standing there' is used about Judas standing with the soldiers in v.5, and now about Peter standing with the friends of the chief priests in v.18 and 25. Peter is standing with the enemies of Jesus. His disguised discipleship, his half-way compromise, though well-intentioned, gets him nowhere.
  - d. Notice also that Peter denies Jesus and denies himself. Peter says twice (maybe the third time implied), 'I am not.' That contrasts with Jesus' two I AM statements.
  - e. Do you think that Jesus wanted Peter and the other disciple to testify to Annas as to what he said?
  - f. What happens when we try to follow Jesus half-heartedly, or half-publicly? Answer: Good intentions without a willingness to suffer – it doesn't help.

Part 2: Jesus' Trial, the Chief Priests' Trial, and Pilate's Trial, John 18:28 – 19:16

1. Track the back and forth between the chief priests and Pilate. Describe their various strategies for trying to get what they want.
2. Let's look at Pilate
  - a. What do you notice about Pilate's movements? He came out (18:29), went back inside (18:33), went out again (18:38), once more came out (19:4), went back inside (19:9), and brought Jesus out (19:13)
  - b. What would it be like to be him?
  - c. What crisis does Jesus cause for Pilate?
  - d. We saw how Peter denied himself. How does Pilate also end up denying himself and his office by denying Jesus? (1) He accepts the accusation against Jesus on a non-answer (18:30). (2) He says the statement 'What is truth?' which is unacceptable from a legal standpoint. The Roman system of law was supposed to be built on justice and order and truth. (3) He releases Barabbas, a known

revolutionary; this is a threat. (4) He sentences Jesus after declaring his innocence 3 times (18:38, 19:4, 19:6).

- i. Illus: This is like Senator Lindsay Graham (R-SC) in 2019 eating his own words about impeachment. During the impeachment of Bill Clinton, Graham said that impeachment was about cleansing the office, and didn't even necessarily require the President to commit a crime, because impeachment was not a legal verdict but a political one. Yet during the impeachment of Trump, Graham did the same thing as Pontius Pilate. These quotes are taken from 'Morning Joe' on MSNBC: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lx5v0\\_tx6G4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lx5v0_tx6G4).
    1. September 25, 2019, he said, 'If you're looking for a circumstance where the President of the United States was threatening the Ukraine with cutting off aid unless they investigate his political opponent, you would be terribly disappointed. That does not exist.'
    2. On October 20, 2019, he said, 'Show me something that is a crime. If you could show me that Trump actually was engaging in a quid pro quo outside the phone call, that would be very disturbing.'
    3. On November 5, 2019, he said, 'The President of Ukraine said, 'No. I was never told if I don't do this, I don't get the military aid'... I'm not impressed with this whole line of impeachment. I've looked at the phone call. I find nothing wrong here. I'm not going to entertain impeaching the President over this matter. Period. Done... Show me where this is [quid pro quo]. You've got some guy presuming something.'
  - e. How else does Pilate try to not take responsibility? (1) By being 'culturally sensitive' on a sarcastic, nominal level and releasing Barabbas (the custom at Passover was to honor the liberation of Israel by releasing one prisoner, to honor/mock the Jewish 'independence day'); (2) By beating Jesus for no reason to satisfy the hostility of the Jews toward him. Police brutality with a confession of no reason. (3) By telling the Jews to crucify him themselves. That was against Roman policy. Rome stripped the Jews and other conquered peoples of the right of capital punishment.
  - f. Why does the accusation 'you are no friend of Caesar' light the fire under Pilate? Because 'friend of Caesar' is a political title that Pilate wanted to earn/maintain.
  - g. What does it mean that a system of justice unjustly sentences Jesus to death? Why would this happen today or not?
  - h. How might we betray Jesus, too, because of our desire for power?
3. Let's look at the chief priests
- a. How does Pilate become a witness about Jesus to the chief priests? (Notice that Jesus seemed to want Peter's testimony and didn't get it. So he gets Pilate to give testimony about himself to the chief priests, even though Pilate didn't believe either.)
  - b. Share your observations. (1) Pilate tells them to judge him by your own law (18:31) and if they did that, they would believe Jesus. (2) Pilate calls Jesus 'the king of the Jews' (18:39), and dresses him up as a king, even though it is in mockery and irony. (3) Pilate places thorns on Jesus' head, which are symbols of the curse from Genesis 3; this signifies that Jesus is bearing the curse of the fall on himself (19:5). (4) Pilate declares Jesus' innocence 3 times to them. (5) In an ironic twist in the Greek language, Pilate 'set him [Jesus] on the judge's seat' (19:13), making Jesus out to be the judge of the chief priests while Pilate is a witness.
  - c. How do the chief priests wind up denying themselves in order to deny Jesus? (1) They betray their own law (18:31 and 19:7). (2) They become hypocritical, trying to be ceremonially clean (18:28) while forcing an innocent man to get beaten and crucified. (3) They refuse to hear Pilate's evidence, and are therefore unjust. (4) They commit a total sacrilege by saying, 'We have no king but Caesar.' They were supposed to say, 'God is our king' (see Judges 8:23 and 1 Sam.12:12) but now they embrace Caesar as king in order to kill Jesus. They have become their own judges!
4. (Optional) What purpose does irony serve in this entire passage? How is sin an irony?
5. Summary conclusions
- a. What happens if we try to follow Jesus half-heartedly, or half-publicly?
  - b. When we (or other people) deny Jesus, what becomes of our (or their) identity?
    - i. Illus: The incident where a computer support desk got a call from someone who asked, 'Why doesn't my coffee cup holder work anymore?' She was using her CD tray as a coffee cup

holder. We are designed by God to be marvelously complex. We reduce ourselves down to coffee cup holders.

- ii. Illus: Me, dating in high school, becoming dependent on others for approval and identity. 'Tell me who I am.'
  - iii. Illustration of self-negation: G.K Chesterton, a British social commentator, said: 'But the new rebel is a skeptic, and will not entirely trust anything. He has no loyalty; therefore he can never really be a revolutionist. And the fact that he doubts everything really gets in his way when he wants to denounce anything. For all denunciation implies trust in a moral framework of some kind; and the modern skeptic doubts not only the thing he denounces, but the doctrine by which he denounces it. [Chesterton then gives some examples from his time, which I've updated: *We denounce marriage as a lie, and then we denounce Tiger Woods for treating it as a lie. In a social justice meeting, we denounce Nike for treating Third World people as if they were animals, and then in a science class, we prove that they are animals. In an international studies class, we denounce war as a waste of life, and then in philosophy class, we denounce life as a waste of time. We denounce a white policeman for beating a black man, but we denounce any moral framework by which white bankers are really responsible for black foreclosures.*] In short, the modern revolutionist, being an infinite skeptic, is always engaged in undermining [himself]. In his book on politics he attacks men for trampling on morality; in his book on ethics he attacks morality for trampling on men. Therefore the modern man in revolt has become practically useless for all purposes of revolt. By rebelling against everything he has lost his right to rebel against anything.' (G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, 1909).
  - iv. What is that for you?
- c. What is your strategy for self-preservation? How does Jesus' call to testify about him provoke a crisis for you?

Vying for power and position at all costs

Passivity or inaction that effectually denies Jesus

Maintaining ritual purity or an external shell of spirituality while rejecting Jesus in the heart

Pursuing good/zealous intentions for success without embracing the sufferings of following Christ

Becoming entangled in politics and power systems in ways that make it more difficult for you to align yourself with Jesus