

# **Bible Study September 6, 2023**

## **JOHN 18 (ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION)**

### **Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus**

***1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. 2 Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. 3 So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.***

The Jewish religious leaders were given authority by the Romans to make arrests for minor infractions. The Roman soldiers may not have participated in this arrest but just accompanied the Temple guards to make sure matters didn't get out of control.

***4 Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" 5 They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.***

John does not record Judas's kiss of greeting (Matthew 26:49; Mark 14:45; Luke 22:47-48), but Judas's kiss marked a turning point for the disciples. With Jesus' arrest, each one's life would be radically different. For the first time, Judas openly betrayed Jesus before the other disciples. His betrayal must have devastated them. Then, also for the first time, Jesus' loyal disciples ran away from him (Matthew 26:56). The band of disciples would undergo severe testing before the Holy Spirit transformed them from hesitant followers to dynamic leaders.

***6 When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.***

The power of the actual name of God threw these soldiers to the ground. By the words "I AM he," Jesus declared his divinity again (Exodus 3:14; also see John 8:50). He was saying, "The I AM is here." The Temple guards would have comprehended what Jesus meant. Jesus affirmed with his powerful voice that the earthly government had no power over him except as he would allow.

***7 So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." 8 Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." 9 This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one." 10 Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) 11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"***

Trying to protect Jesus, Peter pulled out a sword and wounded the high priest's slave. But Jesus told Peter to put away his sword and allow God's plan to unfold. When we face dangerous times, we can be tempted to take matters into our own hands, to force the issue. Such moves are not what God desires for us. Instead, we must trust God to work out his plan. Think of it—if Peter had had his way, Jesus would not have gone to the cross, and God's plan of redemption would have been thwarted. Luke records that Jesus touched the man's ear and healed him (Luke 22:51).

The cup” refers to the suffering, isolation, and death that Jesus would have to endure in order to atone for the sins of the world. In the Old Testament, the image of a cup referred to the outpouring of God’s wrath (see Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:18). The Father gave Jesus this cup—not Judas, nor the Jewish leaders, nor the Romans. It was part of his plan.

## **Jesus Faces Annas and Caiaphas**

***12 So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. 13 First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.***

Jesus was immediately taken to the high priest’s residence, even though it was the middle of the night. This gathering was illegal and against Jewish protocol. The religious leaders were in a hurry—they wanted to complete the execution before the Sabbath and get on with the Passover celebration. This residence was a palace whose outer walls enclosed a courtyard where servants and soldiers could warm themselves around a fire.

Both Annas and Caiaphas had been high priests. Annas was Israel’s high priest from AD 6 to 15, when he was deposed by Roman rulers. Caiaphas, Annas’s son-in-law, was appointed high priest from AD 18 to 36 or 37. According to Jewish law, the office of high priest was held for life. Many Jews, therefore, still considered Annas the high priest and still called him by that title. But although Annas retained much authority among the Jews, Caiaphas made the final decisions.

Both Caiaphas and Annas cared more about their political ambitions than about their responsibility to lead the people to God. Though they were religious leaders, they had become evil. As the nation’s spiritual leaders, they should have been sensitive to God’s revelation. They should have known that Jesus was the Messiah about whom the Scriptures spoke, and they should have pointed the people to him. But when deceitful men and women pursue evil plans, they want to eliminate all opposition. Instead of honestly evaluating Jesus’ claims based on their knowledge of Scripture, these religious leaders sought to further their own selfish ambitions and were even willing to kill God’s Son, if that’s what it took, to do it.

***14 It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.***

## **Peter Denies Jesus**

***15 Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, 16 but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in.***

The other disciple is probably John, the author of this Gospel. He knew the high priest and identified himself to the woman at the door. Because of his connections, John got himself and Peter into the courtyard. But Peter refused to identify himself as Jesus’ follower. Peter’s experiences in the next few hours would change his life.

***17 The servant girl at the door said to Peter, “You also are not one of this man’s disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.” 18 Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire,***

***because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.***

### **The High Priest Questions Jesus**

***<sup>19</sup> The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. <sup>20</sup> Jesus answered him, “I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. <sup>21</sup> Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said.” <sup>22</sup> When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, “Is that how you answer the high priest?” <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, “If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?” <sup>24</sup> Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.***

During the night, Jesus had a pretrial hearing before Annas prior to being taken to Caiaphas and the entire high council (Mark 14:53-65). The religious leaders knew they had no grounds for charging Jesus, so they tried to build evidence against him by using false witnesses (Mark 14:55-59).

### **Peter Denies Jesus Again**

***<sup>25</sup> Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, “You also are not one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.”***

The other three Gospels say that Peter's three denials happened near a fire in the courtyard outside Caiaphas's palace. John places the first denial outside Annas's home and the other two denials outside Caiaphas's. This was very likely the same courtyard. The high priest's compound was large, and Annas and Caiaphas undoubtedly lived near each other.

***<sup>26</sup> One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Did I not see you in the garden with him?” <sup>27</sup> Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.***

We can easily blame the high council for their injustice in condemning Jesus, but we must remember that Peter and the rest of the disciples also contributed to Jesus' pain by deserting and denying him (Matthew 26:56, 75). While most of us are not like the religious leaders, we are all like the disciples, for all of us have been guilty of denying that Jesus is Lord in vital areas of our lives or of keeping secret our identity as believers in times of pressure. Don't excuse yourself by pointing at others whose sins seem worse than yours. Instead, come to Jesus for forgiveness and healing.

Imagine standing outside while Jesus, your Lord and Master, is questioned. Imagine watching this man whom you have come to believe is the long-awaited Messiah being abused and beaten. Naturally, Peter was confused and afraid. To deny Christ is a serious sin. But later Jesus forgave Peter (21:15-17). No sin is too great for Jesus to forgive if you are truly repentant. He will forgive even your worst sin if you turn from it and ask his pardon.

This fulfilled Jesus' words to Peter after he promised he would never deny him (13:38; Mark 14:31).

## Jesus Before Pilate

***28 Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover.***

By Jewish law, entering the house of a Gentile would cause a Jewish person to be ceremonially defiled. As a result, he could not take part in worship at the Temple or celebrate the festivals until he was restored to a state of cleanness. Afraid of being defiled, these men stayed outside the house where they had taken Jesus for trial. They kept the ceremonial requirements of their religion while harboring murder and treachery in their hearts.

***29 So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?"***

This Roman governor, Pilate, was in charge of Judea (the region where Jerusalem was located) from AD 26 to 36. Pilate was unpopular with the Jews because he had raided the Temple treasuries for money to build an aqueduct. He did not like the Jews, but when Jesus, the King of the Jews, stood before him, Pilate found him innocent.

***30 They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you."***

Pilate knew what was going on; he knew that the religious leaders hated Jesus, and he did not want to act as their executioner. They could not sentence Jesus to death themselves—permission had to come from a Roman leader. But Pilate initially refused to sentence him without sufficient evidence. Jesus' life became a pawn in a political power struggle.

***31 Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death."***

Pilate made four attempts to deal with Jesus: (1) He tried to put the responsibility on someone else (18:31); (2) he tried to find a way of escape so he could release Jesus (18:39); (3) he tried to compromise by having Jesus flogged rather than handing him over to die (19:1-3); and (4) he tried a direct appeal to the sympathy of the accusers (19:15). Everyone has to decide what to do with Jesus. Pilate tried to let everyone else decide for him—and in the end, he lost.

***32 This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.***

This prediction is recorded in Matthew 20:19 and John 12:32, 35. Crucifixion was a common method of execution for criminals who were not Roman citizens.

## My Kingdom Is Not of This World

***33 So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" 34 Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?"***

If Pilate was asking this question in his role as the Roman governor, he would have been inquiring whether Jesus was setting up a rebel government. But the Jews were using the word king to mean their religious ruler, the Messiah. Israel was a captive nation, under the authority of the Roman Empire. A rival king might have threatened Rome; a Messiah could have been a purely religious leader.

**<sup>35</sup> Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” <sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” <sup>37</sup> Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”**

Pilate asked Jesus a straightforward question, and Jesus answered clearly. Jesus is a king, but one whose kingdom is not of this world. Pilate seemed to have no question in his mind that Jesus was speaking the truth and was innocent of any crime. It is also apparent that while recognizing the truth of Jesus' innocence, Pilate chose to ignore it and sentence him to death. It is a tragedy when we fail to recognize the truth. It is a greater tragedy when we recognize the truth but fail to act on it.

**<sup>38</sup> Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”**

**After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him.**

Pilate was cynical; he thought that all truth was relative. To many government officials, truth was whatever the majority of people agreed with or whatever helped advance personal power or political goals. We see the same thing today. If we refuse to accept any standard of truth, we have no basis for claiming something to be morally right or wrong. Many people today have rejected the idea of objective truth, so every truth claim is revamped or criticized as a narrative, spin, or agenda. Justice becomes defined as whatever works or whatever helps those in power. In Jesus and his Word, we have a standard for truth and for our moral behavior. Perhaps Pilate should have asked, “Who is truth?”

**<sup>39</sup> But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” <sup>40</sup> They cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.**

Barabbas was a rebel against Rome, and although he had committed murder, he was probably a hero among the Jews. The Jews hated being governed by Rome and paying taxes to the despised government. Barabbas, who had led a rebellion and failed, was released instead of Jesus, the only one who could truly help Israel.