

The Gospel of John Chapter 18:12-40 Lesson 53

January 26,2005

Tonight we are going to continue our study in the 18th chapter of the Gospel of John.

Last week we talked about how Jesus left nothing to chance during these last few hours of His life here on earth. He chose the time, place and manner of His death. He deliberately chose the **Garden of Gethsemane** as the place where He would be confronted by those seeking to kill Him.

He wanted to contrast what happen in the Garden of Eden with what happened in the Garden of Gethsemane.

John also mentions that on His way to the garden Jesus took His disciples over the Brook Kidron. A drain ran from the temple altar down to the Kidron ravine to drain away the blood of the animals that were sacrificed. At Passover more than 200,000 animals were sacrificed. Think about it. When Jesus and His disciples crossed the Kidron it had been stained by the blood of countless animals through the years and was about to be covered with the blood of those 200,000 animals that were already being prepared to die.

It was no accident that Jesus chose to walk that particular path that evening. He was about to offer Himself as the supreme sacrifice that would take away the sins of the world and make the sacrifice of those animals and the blood of those animals no longer necessary.

Luke tells us....

Luke 22:44 (NKJV)

And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Jesus was not only facing death by crucifixion, which is certainly one of the most horrible means of execution that man has ever dreamed up. But He was about to have the totality of man's sin placed upon Him. He was about to become sin. The prospect of that caused Him to break out in a bloody sweat.

John 18:4-6 (NKJV)

Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, **went forward and said to them**, "Whom are you seeking?" [5] They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. [6] Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.

Jesus did not hide in the bushes. He didn't wait for the soldiers to find Him. He went forward to meet them. He identified Himself. When He said, "I am He" they fell to the ground!

This is powerful! They didn't fall to the ground when He asked them what they wanted. They fell to the ground when He said, "I am He."

In the original Greek His response is simply "I AM!". They fell to the ground because of the power that proceeded from Him when He identified Himself as the Great "I AM".

John 18:12-13 (NKJV)

Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him. [13] And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year.

First, they took Jesus to Annas. Annas had served many years earlier as the high priest. The Jews recognized the office of High Priest as a position for life but the Romans wanted to control the person who held the office so they appointed a different high priest whenever they thought it was to their advantage to do so. Jewish historians tell us that five sons of Annas and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, served as high priest during this period of Roman occupation.

Caiaphas had been appointed as the high priest by the Romans, but Annas was still a very powerful man among the Jews. So they led Jesus to him as a trophy of their victory.

John 18:14 (NKJV)

[14] Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

John 18:14 (Living)

Caiaphas was the one who told the other Jewish leaders, "Better that one should die for all."

What is that all about? To understand that statement we have to go back to John chapter 11. Jesus had just raised Lazarus from the dead and many Jewish leaders believed on Jesus.

John 11:45-53 (Living)

And so at last many of the Jewish leaders who were with Mary and saw it happen, finally believed on him. [46] But some went away to the Pharisees and reported it to them.

[47] Then the chief priests and Pharisees convened a council to discuss the situation.

"What are we going to do?" they asked each other. "For this man certainly does miracles. [48] If we let him alone the whole nation will follow him-- and then the Roman army will come and kill us and take over the Jewish government."

[49] And one of them, Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year, said, "You stupid idiots-- [50] let this one man die for the people--why should the whole nation perish?"

[51] This prophecy that Jesus should die for the entire nation came from Caiaphas in his position as High Priest--he didn't think of it by himself, but was inspired to say it. [52] It was a prediction that Jesus' death would not be for Israel only, but for all the children of God scattered around the world. [53] So from that time on the Jewish leaders began plotting Jesus' death.

Now, look at verse 15.....

[15] And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. [16] But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in. [17] Then the servant 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." [18] Now the servants and officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves. And Peter stood with them and warmed himself.

Now look at verse 19....

John 18:19-24 (NKJV)

The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine. [20] Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. [21] Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said." [22] And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, "Do You answer the high priest like that?" [23] Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?" [24] Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Annas asked Jesus about His disciples. Perhaps he was wanting to find out who the converts were who were religious leaders but Jesus didn't give him any information about His disciples. He also asked Jesus about His doctrine.

The real heart of Annas' question related to the teaching or doctrine of Jesus Christ. It is true that the religious crowd reacted against the miracles of Christ because that drew attention away from them and onto Christ. But they could have lived with this if had Jesus left out His teaching. Because it was in His teaching that He exposed their own sin, the error of their teaching, and the end result of their lives. It was His teaching that turned upside down the erroneous concepts people had of the Messiah.

What was so different about the teaching of Jesus from that of the priests and other religious leaders? Their typical pattern was to *repeat* what they had learned from others. They memorized the quotations of particular rabbis from various eras and offered their words in answer to questions. But none of them spoke with the authority or depth of understanding and experience that Jesus had. That's why the crowds were amazed when they heard Jesus teach for "He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:28-29).

John 18:25-32 (NKJV)

Now Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Therefore they said to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not!" [26] One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" [27] Peter then denied again; and immediately a rooster crowed.

Many sermons have been preached from these verses about Peter denying the Lord. I know you are familiar with that part of this chapter.

Let's look at verse 28.

[28] Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. [29] Pilate then went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?"

They couldn't produce a legitimate charge against Jesus so they answered with a sarcastic generality.

[30] They answered and said to him, "If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you." [31] Then Pilate said to them, "You take Him and judge Him according to your law." Therefore the Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death," [32] that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die.

The truth is those religious leaders could have gotten away with a vigilante stoning of Jesus. The certainly had done it to others whom they wanted to get rid of. They did it to Stephen a few months later. But, Caiaphas wanted Jesus to be crucified. He wanted him to be displayed to the people as cursed.

Deut. 21:23 (NKJV)

..... for he who is hanged is accursed of God.

Caiaphas thought that if Jesus was crucified, the Jews would look at Him and say, "He cannot be the Blessed One, He's an imposter."

Caiaphas didn't know or didn't remember that Jesus had already foretold what type of death He would die.

John 3:14 (Living)

And as Moses in the wilderness lifted up the bronze image of a serpent on a pole, even so I must be lifted up upon a pole...

Caiaphas was fulfilling prophecy and didn't even know it.

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John 18:33-35 (NKJV)

Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, **"Are You the King of the Jews?"**

Where did he get that information? Only a week earlier Jesus had been greeted on His arrival in Jerusalem with the palm branches and the cries of "*Hosanna! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David.*" It was well known that Jesus was popularly understood by so many people to be the Messiah.

"Are you the King of the Jews?" And Jesus answered this very interestingly. He takes the spotlight off Himself and turns it onto Pilate. He said. *"Are you saying this on your own initiative or did someone else tell you about Me?"* Pilate, where are your interests?

This man Pilate is standing, literally, at the crossroads of history. The most pivotal figure for all time and eternity, is standing face to face with him, and Jesus is asking him, "How do you see it?" He is encouraging Pilate to start thinking in terms of his own concerns. He's facing, not only the King of the Jews, he's facing the King of the Universe. And that King Who knows where He's from and where He's going, is standing before this Roman governor, with all the confidence that goes with His office, and all the love that goes with His heart as the God Who so loved the world.

Jesus went right to the heart of the matter.

John 18:36 (NKJV)

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

Jesus proclaimed Himself to be a spiritual king and it threw Pilate into a quandary. If Jesus had proclaimed Himself to be an earthly king, Pilate's decision would have been easy. The sentence was death under Roman law. But He proclaimed Himself to be a spiritual king. That was a different matter.

John 18:37-38 (NKJV)

Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." [38] 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 fault in Him at all.

For the rest of my time tonight I want to look at this man named Pilate and the question that he asked Jesus... **"What is truth?"**

On the Day of Pentecost Peter preached a powerful sermon and in it he said....

Acts 2:22-23 (NKJV)

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know-- [23] Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

We know that what happened to Jesus was orchestrated by God. It was all predetermined. Pilate was a key figure in the drama. He had the power to order the execution of Jesus or to let Him go.

Who was he? Some use to say that he never existed. That he was a fictitious character invented by the writers of the gospels. But archaeologists discovered an inscription in the ruins of Caesarea that mentions the reign of Tiberius and this man named Pontius Pilate who was governor of southern Palestine. He reigned from A.D. 27 to A.D. 37. The death of Jesus was near the end of his reign.

Pontius Pilate was given the office of governor of that region by Caesar and was directly responsible to him. Pontius Pilate was the law in that region as far as the Roman Empire was concerned. He was the one who was appointed to handle all financial, political, military and criminal problems that might arise. He had the reputation of being very ruthless and cruel in dealing with people who caused problems. It was nothing for Pilate to order the execution of someone.

Passover was, without question, the biggest event of the year in first century Palestine. Jews from all over the civilized world came on a pilgrimage in order to be there for the Day of Atonement. From the Roman's point of view, if anything was going to go wrong it would be during Passover. So they were on extra alert. It was code red!

The Romans tried to build their empire upon their gods. [small g]. Their gods were limited. Even all their gods put together were limited. Their gods were amplified humanity, not divinity. They had no infinite God.

At the beginning of the Roman Empire they worshipped many gods and goddesses.

A groups of twelve Gods called Dii Consentes was especially honored by the Romans: Iuppiter, Iuno, Minerva, Vesta, Ceres, Diana, Venus, Mars, Mercurius, Neptunus, Volcanus, and Apollo. These are the ones listed by the Poet Ennius about the 3rd Century, B.C.E.

The legend goes that somewhere along in time, an individual wanting to meet the gods, climbed Mount Olympus and said, "There are none up there."

That resulted in a very serious religious vacuum in Rome so the Romans turned from this imaginary pantheon of gods and goddesses to themselves.

In 14 B.C., Augustus became the Caesar, and declared himself to be deity. That was the beginning of emperor worship in the Roman Empire.

That was all well and good if you didn't know the emporer. But Pontius Pilate knew him and he knew that not only were there no gods or goddesses on Mount Olympus, but he also knew that Caesar was no god either. Pilate wondered from time to time, "What is Truth?"

Pilate wasn't impressed with the Roman religion and he obviously wasn't impressed with the Jewish religion either. He was searching for truth but had not been able to find it.

His wife had a dream about Jesus and she told Pilate about it and it troubled him. He didn't know what to think. He knew there was something different about Jesus.

He's come out of a childhood where they used to believe in the gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus, knowing they no longer exist. He's been told that Caesar is god, but Pilate is personally acquainted with Caesar, and the better you know someone, the better you know their faults. He knows Caesar is not god. He's not sure what he believes religiously, so Jesus says, "My kingdom" so clearly. *"My kingdom is not of this world."*

"This world, Pilate, your world, the world where there are uprisings and rebellions and massacres and where you can't even in your own wisdom, judge between what's right and what's wrong, what's true and what's false. Your world of intrigue and manipulation and exploitation, and all these things; your world, Pilate, that ends up in the cemetery outside of town; this is not My kingdom."

"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, My servants, who are not of this world, would see to it that I wouldn't be standing here."

In verse 37, *"Pilate therefore 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 bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.'"*

"I'm telling you the truth, My kingdom is not of this world; if it were, My servants would be fighting. My kingdom is not of this realm. I represent the truth and those who believe the truth listen to me."

Pilate, to whom are you listening? Pilate, what have you heard? Pilate, from where have you formed your opinions?

And here we have Pilate asking the question that gives rise to so much of this thinking, *"What is truth?"* What does he mean by that? Many have suggested that he is just being cynical. Is he just hard-hearted? Or was he truly, sincerely wondering, musing, wistfully asking if there's truth?

Nevertheless, he decided Jesus was not guilty of anything deserving of death. Prisoners were either guilty or innocent. You can go to court today and stand before a judge. A person who is guilty, is sentenced accordingly. A person who is innocent, hopefully is released to go on his way.

Pilate is accustomed to seeing guilty people, and even innocent people, but he's **never** met a righteous person until now. Not only is Jesus **not** guilty, he's beyond innocent. In His world, Jesus is perfectly holy and righteous. It gives Him confidence and Pilate sees it and he knows whatever they've accused Jesus of doing, He hasn't done it. He's not only innocent, but righteous. Pilate says, "*I find no fault in Him.*"