



Disciplers Bible Studies

JOHN
LESSON 19

The Arrest of Jesus John 18:1-40

Introduction

A. Review of Chapter 17

After concluding His upper room discourses with the disciples, Jesus gave an unforgettable, intercessory prayer (Chapter 17). He asked the Father for: 1) *glorification* for Himself; 2) *faithfulness* and *sanctification* for His disciples and 3) *love, unity* and *heaven's glory* for all believers. Thus, He committed Himself and His mission once again to God, prayed for the anxious disciples whom He was leaving and petitioned for all future believers to have the love of God and the life of Christ predominant in their lives.

B. Events Preceding His Passion

In Chapter 18, we enter into the events that immediately precede our Lord's crucifixion and resurrection - His arrest and trials. This was the beginning of Christ's passion ministry, a period of extreme humiliation and suffering at the hands of a world He came to redeem. They imposed every degrading, demeaning, insulting and humiliating act they could think of on Jesus in these last hours.

C. Predominant Theme of Passion

As we study these verses, we begin to realize that insensitive humiliations and barbaric actions are not the predominant theme of Christ's passion. The predominant theme is the deity and the glory of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Increasingly, the magnificence and majesty of this Holy One of God are obvious as He orchestrates God's great plan of redemption in consonance with Old Testament prophecy.

D. Jesus' Complete Control

The passion narrative irrefutably reveals to us the authority and the power of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. The incarnate Son of God masterminded and controlled the very process of His death under the providential guidance of His Father. He was spat upon, slapped, beaten, crowned with thorns, scourged and nailed naked on a criminal's cross. Through all of this, He showed no weakness

or bitter resentment. He demonstrated complete control of the situation by His dignity, His unflinching obedience, His unselfish concern for others and His unswerving faith and commitment to the Father.

E. Synoptic Gospel Accounts

Although each of the Gospels gives a similar report of Jesus' passion, I encourage you to read the Synoptic accounts along with John 18 (Matthew 26:30-27:50; Mark 14:32-15:37; Luke 22:39-23:47.) John provided details not found in the Synoptic records, and vice versa. He wanted to emphasize Jesus as the Son of God and pictured Him as more obviously in control of His destiny. However, reading the other Gospels will give you a sequential record of the specific events and enable you to better understand: 1) the necessity and harmony of four accounts; and 2) why each writer was selective in recording that which was relative and pertinent to his theme (See Lesson 1, Section III. Why Four Gospels?.)

Outline of John 18:1-40

- I. The Garden of Gethsemane (18:1-11)
- II. The Arrest and First Hearing (18:12-24)
- III. The Official Hearing (18:25-27)
- IV. The First Roman Trial (18:28-38a)
- V. The Second Roman Trial (18:38b-40)

I. The Garden of Gethsemane (18:1-11)

A. The Betrayal

After leaving the upper room, Jesus led His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane where they prayed and waited. Judas followed soon thereafter, leading the armed officers and soldiers of the Temple guard to where he had been with Jesus and the other disciples several times. He singled out Jesus from the disciples so that the soldiers would make no mistake. The other Gospels record Jesus' prayers and the traitorous kiss of Judas to identify Jesus. John points out the responsibility and partnership of Judas with the enemies of Jesus by showing that Judas stood with the soldiers when the two opposing groups stood face to face.

B. The Power of *"I am He"*

Visualize an unarmed Jesus, standing up to dozens of soldiers armed with spears and swords. They told Him whom they were seeking and He identified Himself with the words, *"I am He."* Amazingly, the whole organization staggered backward and fell to the ground. This mighty military contingent was felled in an instant by the speech of the Son of God. That should have been strong evidence right there to indicate to the Roman soldiers and Jewish Temple police that Jesus' claim of being deity was true.

C. The Meaning of This Scene

Although some theologians and commentators do not agree, this scene emphasized the divine power of Jesus' authority and majesty. He was not surrendering to this mob because of weakness. He could have kept on knocking them down until they could not rise again. Instead, He surrendered to them, not in weakness, but in strength, so that His Father's will might be accomplished through Him. He knew their intentions and deliberately helped them fulfill their mission.

D. Peter's Courage and Confusion

After the soldiers recovered, Jesus' first concern was for the eleven disciples. Like a true Shepherd, He turned all of His captors' attention and all danger upon Himself, shielding His sheep from the wolves. His protective love focused the soldiers' intentions on Himself, thereby making sure that His friends would be safe. But Peter could not restrain himself. He boldly drew his sword and cut off an ear of the high priest's servant. Peter was confused about God's plan. His violent act could have ended his life right there. The Roman soldiers were ready to retaliate with vengeance. But Jesus intervened, replaced the ear, and healed the man instantly. Peter's act was very courageous, but he was out of tune with the Lord's purpose and plan.

II. The Arrest and Interrogations (18:12-23)

A. The Father's Will

Jesus did not resist arrest because He chose to obey perfectly His Father's will. According to Luke 22:42, Jesus had prayed in the garden, *"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."* Here was the Creator of the universe, the Lord of Glory, willingly submitting to this arresting party and allowing them to tie Him with cords like a common thief. The Roman soldiers and Jewish Temple police led Jesus away to Annas, the high priest, like

a lamb led to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7). Matthew 26:56 and Mark 14:50 record that all of Jesus' disciples abandoned Him when His enemies took Him into custody.

B. Series of Interrogations and Trials

There were a series of religious hearings and political trials during this long night. Annas, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin were instrumental in the religious confrontations. Pilate, Herod and the Jewish people were prominent in the political trials. Jesus was arrested around midnight and all of these events took place between 1:00 AM and 9:00 AM, about the time of His crucifixion. He withstood at least five, perhaps six, unofficial and official hearings and trials during these eight hours.

C. The First Hearing

There were two high priests over the Sanhedrin at this time. Annas had been deposed by the Roman Procurator, but was still regarded the legitimate high priest by the Jews because the Mosaic law considered it a life-time position. The Romans had appointed Caiaphas, Annas' son-in-law, to succeed him. However, the Jews still regarded Annas as the true high priest and, although he was not officially recognized, he continued to exert much influence throughout his lifetime. So, the arresting party took Jesus to Annas first.

D. Peter's First Denial

Peter and another disciple, most likely John, had followed the arresting party into the high priest's courtyard. A servant girl recognized John as one of Jesus' disciples and, after letting them inside the door, asked Peter if he was a disciple too. Peter succumbed to the blood-thirsty intimidation of this hostile mob and he denied being one of Jesus' disciples. He showed his denial by joining the enemies of Jesus as they warmed themselves around the charcoal fire.

E. Annas' Interrogation

Annas conducted the first hearing with questions about Jesus' disciples and teaching. Jesus replied that He always taught openly and that He was not promoting insurrection. He was not a political revolutionary and had nothing to hide. He invited Annas to question those who had heard Him. One of the Temple officers thought this response was discourteous and struck Jesus with the palm of his hand. Then Annas sent Jesus to his son-in-law, Caiaphas. John noted that Jesus remained bound as

a criminal even though He had done nothing to warrant physical restraint.

III. The Official Hearing (18:24-27)

A. Caiaphas, the High Priest

In order to bring charges against Jesus before the Sanhedrin, Caiaphas, as the official high priest, had to interrogate Jesus. Caiaphas, like Annas, was shrewd, hypocritical, and marginally honest. He took advantage of his religious position by allowing money to be made in the Temple by fleecing worshipers under the guise of Temple tribute and sacrifices. Jesus had twice before cleared the Temple of these shameful practices. Since Christ had attacked him where it hurt the most, his pocket book, Caiaphas now had his chance for revenge.

B. A Mockery of Justice

It is difficult to tell whether the current high priest, Caiaphas, or the deposed high priest, Annas, concluded these hearings since they lived in close proximity to each other. It probably was Caiaphas, but whoever it was, the whole proceeding was a mockery of justice. For example, they violated their own Jewish law stating that a prisoner was not to be asked any kind of question by which his own answer would involve admitting his guilt, much like the Fifth Amendment of our day.

B. Peter's Second and Third Denials

During Caiaphas' unjust inquiry, Peter was in the courtyard warming himself with the high priest's servants and officers. When asked a second time about his association with Jesus, Peter again denied that he was one of Jesus' disciples. Then a servant, who was a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off in the garden, questioned Peter even more pointedly. Peter uttered his strongest denial yet and immediately the cock crowed.

C. The Charge of Blasphemy

The religious hearings by the Jews are reported more fully in Matthew 26:59-65 and Mark 14:53-59. Caiaphas and Annas decided on the charge of blasphemy and took it to the Sanhedrin council meeting for an official determination of the charge against Jesus. This took place in the Temple after the doors were opened. The Sanhedrin confirmed the charge of blasphemy, and the guards and people began to taunt and punish Jesus. They spat on Him, blindfolded Him, beat Him and struck Him with the palms of their

hands. These were the first physical assaults on Jesus on His way to the cross.

D. Three Facts About His Suffering

The passion of Jesus embodied terrible pain and suffering, but eventually led to an eternal weight of victory and glory. There are three things to note about the cruel punishment involved in His arrest, trials and crucifixion:

1) His humiliation and sufferings were the fulfillment of God's plan. The impact and effects of these passion chapters were clearly prophesied in the Old Testament. During His ministry, Jesus also had predicted in detail His sufferings and crucifixion;

2) His sufferings were voluntary. He was not a victim of circumstances over which He had no control. He was not a helpless martyr dying for a cause. He was the Master Conductor orchestrating this concert to God's music;

3) His sufferings enhanced His majesty, His authority and control in these mock trials, His crucifixion and resurrection. They clearly illustrate His earlier statements about power to fulfill His mission. *"I lay down My life that I might take it up again"* (10:17.)

IV. The First Roman Trial (18:28-38a)

A. Pilate's Response

Having concluded the Jewish religious trials, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin leaders took Jesus to the Roman military governor's headquarters. Pontius Pilate asked the Jews what their formal charge was against Jesus. They responded that Jesus was an evildoer. They apparently assumed that this was serious enough and that Pilate would "rubber stamp" their decision to kill Jesus. Pilate told them that if Jesus violated Jewish law, they should judge Him themselves. This forced them to say that only Jesus' death would satisfy them.

B. Why Roman Crucifixion?

The question might be asked, "Why didn't the Jews stone Jesus according to their own law?" The reason is that their attempts to stone Him had failed earlier (John 11:8.) They had failed because God had ordained that Jesus was to die by crucifixion. His death was to involve not only Jews, but Romans as representatives of Gentiles. In this manner, all of mankind shared the guilt concerning the death of the Son of God.

C. Pilate and Jesus Alone

The next phase of Pilate's trial was conducted with Jesus alone. Pilate asked Him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He probably was trying to determine if Jesus was setting Himself up as King against Caesar. There is both irony and unbelief in Pilate's question. It comes across like, "You poor bruised, weary looking man. Do you really claim to be a King?" Pilate was showing his indifference about Jesus and His race. He reminded Jesus that His own people had delivered Him up for punishment.

D. The Kingdom of God

Jesus spoke straight-forwardly about His Kingdom, and at one point said, *"You say rightly that I am a King."* He told Pilate that His Kingdom was not understandable by earthly standards of military power and violent revolutions. His Kingdom was a spiritual kingdom, an inner, invisible rule of God over the hearts of men and women who yield themselves to His will. For this cause, Jesus came into the world to bear witness of the truth. This was the secret of the universe – the truth in its absolute sense was exclusively revealed in Jesus Christ. It was in His Kingdom that God's eternal purpose for mankind was certainly and completely fulfilled by His beloved Son.

E. Herod's Brief Trial (Luke 23:6-12)

At this point, Pilate learned that Jesus was from Galilee, so he sent Him to Herod who was in Jerusalem at this time (Luke 23:6-12.) John omitted this brief account of contempt and mockery, perhaps to keep the reader's attention on Jesus and Pilate. The Herod exposure further indicated the humiliation and inhumane treatment that Jesus experienced through this entire ordeal.

V. The Second Roman Trial (18:38b-40)

When Jesus returned from Herod, Pilate took Him outside the Praetorium in front of the Jews. He told the crowd that he found no fault in Jesus. Pilate asked them if, according to their custom of releasing someone on the Passover, they wanted him to release the King of the Jews. The Jews, however, wanted no part of freedom for Jesus. They wanted His blood. They cried out that they wanted Barabbas, the robber, released rather than this Man, Jesus. Pilate's second trial will continue in Lesson 20, Chapter 19.

Application:

In His passion, Jesus succumbed to the hatred, bitterness and nastiness of men because He trusted His Father's sovereignty, will and complete control of the situation. He even willingly and cooperatively helped His tormentors carry out their violent agenda. When you experience severe trials, do you: 1) remind yourself not to fear because the Lord your God has redeemed you, called you by name, and claimed you as His own; 2) remember that He has promised to strengthen you and uphold you with His righteous right hand; 3) request Him to help you place your complete trust and confidence under the shadow of His wings and 4) reflect on what He is teaching you and how He is helping you by this experience?