

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

JOHN

LESSON 17

John Chapter 18



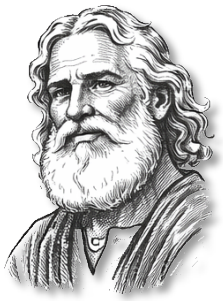
Brief Review - The Gospel of John So Far:



Throughout John's Gospel, we have witnessed the progressive revelation of Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God—the Word made flesh. Through His miracles, His seven great "I AM" declarations, and His confrontations with the religious authorities, Jesus has demonstrated His divine identity and His mission to redeem mankind. In Chapters 13–17, our attention shifts to His final private instructions to the disciples, culminating in His remarkable High Priestly Prayer, in which He prays for Himself, His disciples, and all future believers (John 1:1–14; 20:30–31; 17:1–26).

Introduction to Chapter 18

Before entering Chapter 18, let's establish several important historical, prophetic, and chronological foundations. These will help us understand why the timing of Christ's arrest, trials, crucifixion, and resurrection is so significant.



John's Unique Perspective → John approaches the final hours of Jesus' earthly ministry differently from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. While the Synoptic Gospels emphasize Christ's suffering, humiliation, and humanity, **John emphasizes His deity, majesty, and sovereign authority**. Even during His arrest and trials, Jesus remains completely in control.

Everything promised in the preceding chapters—eternal life, the Holy Spirit, the believer's future dwelling with Christ, and ultimately the restoration of Israel and the establishment of the Kingdom—depends upon what occurs in Chapters 18–20. According to Scripture, the Gospel is not fundamentally about Christ's teachings or miracles, but about His death for our sins, burial, and resurrection.

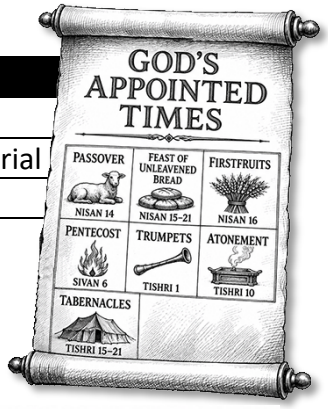
The Cross did not interrupt God's plan. It was the central event around which the entire biblical program of redemption was constructed!



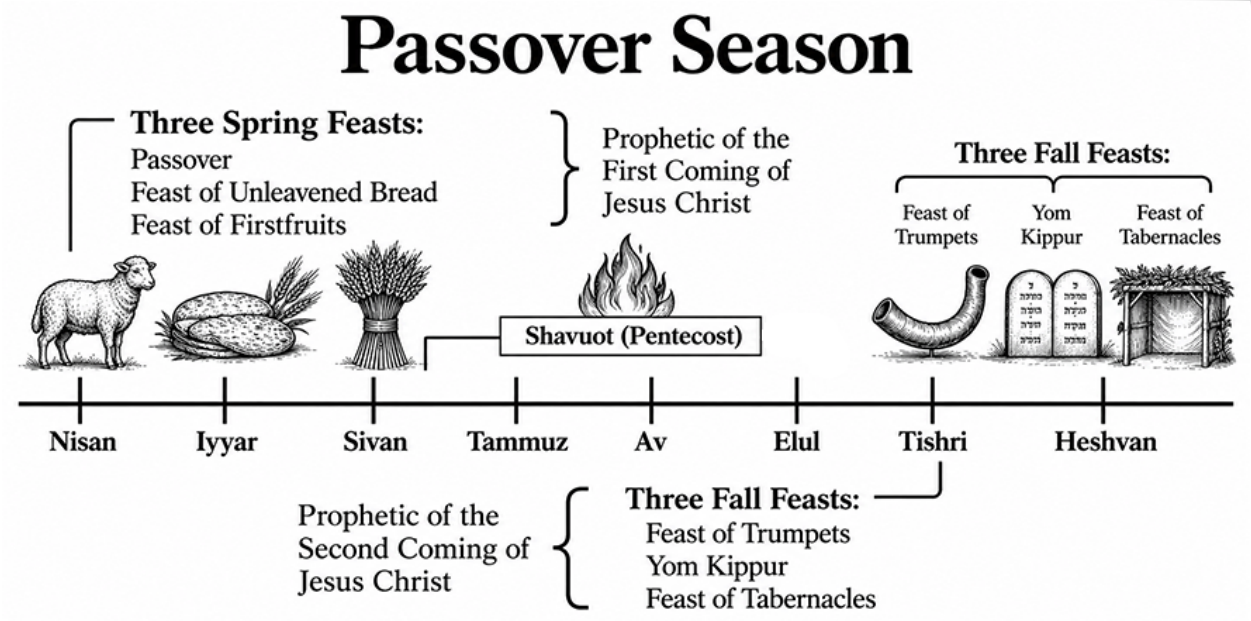
The final hours of Jesus' earthly ministry occurred during the Passover festival. To help us understand this fully, let's review Passover again.

The Gospel of Luke says, “Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover” (Luke 22:1). Notice that Luke calls the entire festival season Passover, even though the Mosaic Law identifies three distinct, overlapping feasts. This distinction becomes essential when reconstructing the chronology of Christ's final week (Lev. 23:5–11).

Feast	Timing	Prophetic significance
Passover	Nisan 14	Christ, our sacrificial Lamb
Unleavened Bread	Nisan 15–21	Christ's sinlessness and burial
Firstfruits	Day after the Sabbath	Christ's resurrection



These are not merely commemorative Jewish festivals. They are divine appointments (*moedim*) that prophetically anticipate the work of the Messiah. The spring feasts point to His **First Coming**, while the autumn feasts anticipate His **Second Coming** (Lev. 23; 1 Cor. 5:7; 15:20–23).



Passover — The Lamb Prepared Beforehand



The Passover imagery begins long before the Exodus. On Mount Moriah, Abraham declared, “God will provide himself a lamb,” establishing a remarkable prophetic anticipation of Christ's sacrifice. Centuries later, John the Baptist twice identified Jesus as that very Lamb who would take away the “***sin of the world***” (Gen. 22:7–8; John 1:29, 36).

Notice the prophetic details:

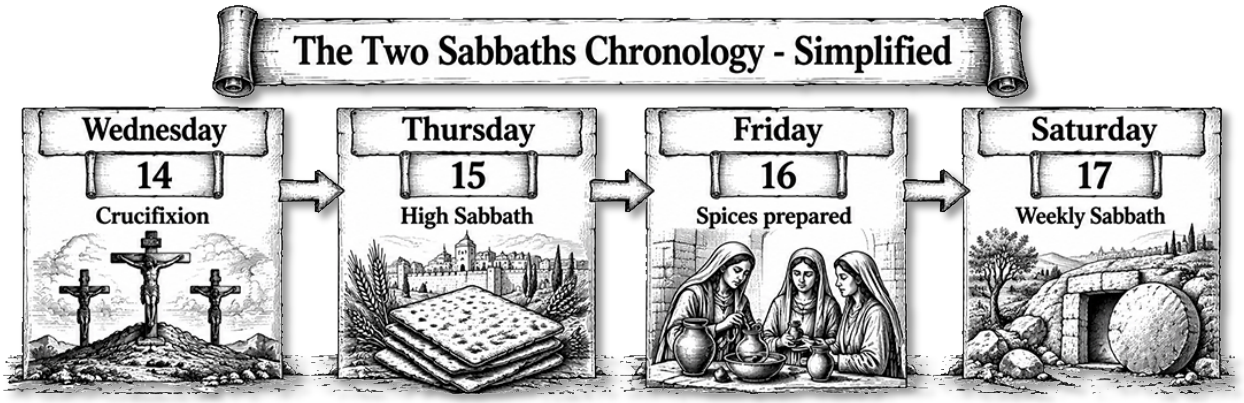
- ✓ **The Lamb:** Christ fulfills the Passover sacrifice (Ex. 12:3–6; 1 Cor. 5:7).
- ✓ **No broken bones:** The Passover requirement is fulfilled at the Cross (Ex. 12:46; John 19:33–36).
- ✓ **The new beginning:** We can connect Christ's resurrection with Noah's ark resting after the Flood (Gen. 8:4; 1 Cor. 15:20).



Remez — The Prophetic Pattern: In Genesis 22, God provides a substitute for Isaac. In Exodus 12, the blood of the lamb protects Israel from judgment. At Calvary, Jesus becomes the ultimate sacrifice, fulfilling the pattern established throughout the Old Testament.

Friday or Wednesday? — The Crucifixion Chronology: The traditional Christian calendar places the Crucifixion on Friday and the Resurrection on Sunday. This chronology is easily challenged, with a Wednesday crucifixion supported by three specific biblical observations.

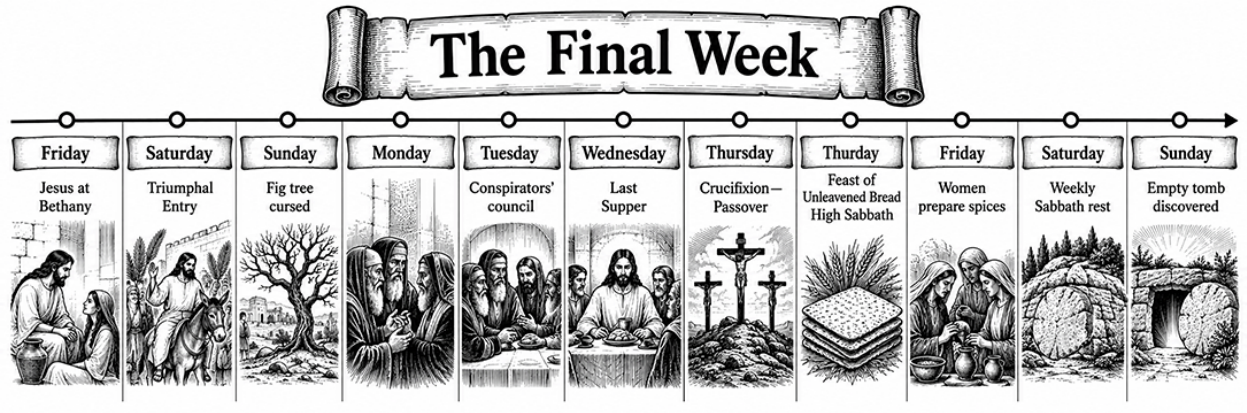
1. **Three days and three nights**: He takes Jesus' statement as a literal chronological requirement that Friday afternoon to Sunday morning cannot satisfy (Matt. 12:40).
    - "***For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.***"
2. **The journey to Bethany:** Jesus arrived six days before Passover, following a journey from Jericho that exceeded a Sabbath day's journey under the Friday chronology (John 12:1).
3. **Two Sabbaths:** Both Matthew 28:1 and Mark 16:1 use the Greek plural sabbatōn, although both are translated singular in the KJV. We can identify a festival Sabbath and the regular weekly Sabbath during the burial period (Matt. 28:1; Lev. 23:6–7).
    - **Matt. 28:1]** "*In the end of the **sabbath(s)**, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.*"
    - **Mark 16:1]** "*And when the **sabbath(s)** was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.*"



Nisan 14 is the day of the Crucifixion, Nisan 15 is the annual high Sabbath associated with Unleavened Bread, and Saturday is the regular weekly Sabbath. This leaves an intervening Friday for the women to prepare spices, followed by their Sabbath rest. (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56).

Another important observation is that the discovery of the empty tomb on Sunday morning does not, by itself, establish the precise hour of the Resurrection. His reconstruction also places the Triumphal Entry on Saturday rather than the traditional Palm Sunday.

How the shortened timeline came about: All four Gospels associate Jesus' burial with the preparation before a Sabbath (Matt. 27:57-62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:31). They also place the discovery of the empty tomb on the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). Because, normally, the weekly Sabbath was Saturday, the preparation day was ordinarily understood to be Friday. Early on, the Two High Sabbaths and the Greek plural were ignored, and the church adopted it as observance.



John Chapter 18

John 18:1] *"When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples."*

John does not identify the garden by its familiar name, **Gethsemane**. Instead, he draws attention to the brook Cedron, or Kidron, separating Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. The name **Kidron** suggests darkness or blackness, an appropriate setting for the events about to unfold. (John 18:1; Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32)

The Kidron Valley also has significant Old Testament associations. David crossed this same valley when fleeing Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion, betrayed by his trusted counselor Ahithophel. Now the greater Son of David crosses the valley on His way to another betrayal, this time by Judas Iscariot (2 Sam. 15:23, 30–31; Ps. 41:9; John 13:18).

Gethsemane means **"oil press,"** reflecting the olive groves traditionally associated with this place. Just as olives were crushed to produce oil, Jesus experienced extraordinary anguish as He submitted to the Father's will. The Synoptic Gospels describe His agonizing prayer; John instead focuses on His sovereign authority during the arrest (Matt. 26:36–46; Luke 22:39–44; John 18:4–6).

John 18:2-3] *"And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with his disciples. Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons."*

The garden was a familiar retreat where Jesus frequently gathered with His disciples. Some scholars believe a friend or supporter may have privately owned it, giving Jesus and His disciples a regular place of refuge. Judas knew exactly where to find Him because he had shared those intimate moments of fellowship (Luke 22:39). So, Judas did not merely provide information to Jesus' enemies; he exploited the confidence and access that came from being one of the Twelve.

John identifies two groups accompanying Judas: **a band of soldiers** and **officers supplied by the chief priests and Pharisees**. The Greek suggests a Roman military unit of 400-600 soldiers, while the officers were associated with the Temple authorities, possibly including men who had previously failed to arrest Jesus during the Feast of Tabernacles. The soldiers arrived carrying lanterns, torches, and weapons. They were prepared for darkness, resistance, or an attempted escape, apparently expecting a dangerous fugitive rather than the Prince of Peace.

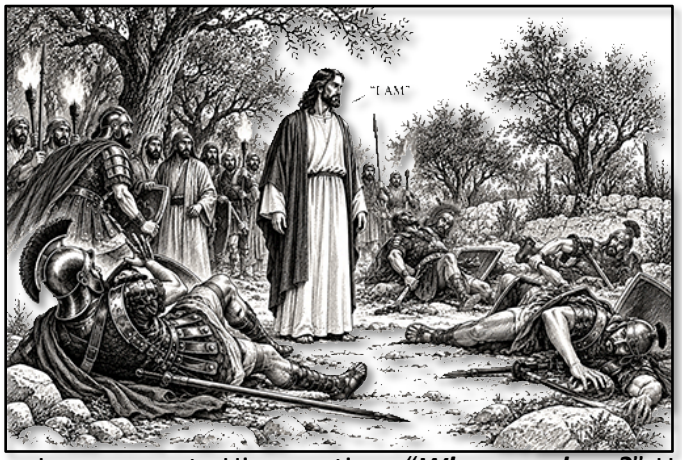
John 18:4-5] *"Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them."*

Jesus knew the betrayal, arrest, humiliation, crucifixion, and resurrection that lay ahead. Nothing here, or in the coming hours, would catch Him by surprise. Also, notice that Jesus "***went forth,***" not hiding or waiting to be discovered, and takes control of the encounter by asking, "***Whom seek ye?***" The arresting party identifies Him by His earthly designation, **Jesus of Nazareth**.

LESSON

Judas Stood With Them: John adds a seemingly small but important detail: "*And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.*" Although Judas once stood among the Twelve, heard the words of eternal life, and participated in Christ's ministry, he never realized, like Peter, that Jesus was truly "***the Christ.***" Now, at the decisive moment, he stands with Jesus' enemies, his position reflecting the spiritual allegiance he has chosen, whether he realized it or not (John 6:70–71; 13:27, 30; 18:5).

John 18:6-7] "*As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth."*



As soon as Jesus uttered the two simple words, "***I AM***" (v. 5), declaring His identity, the arresting party fell to the ground. No one attacks, threatens, or strikes the soldiers with any visible weapon. Jesus, in a deliberate demonstration of His authority, spoke the divine name (Greek: egō eimi) as the God of the universe, recalling God's self-revelation to Moses at the burning bush. Now, after the soldiers regain their footing, Jesus repeats His question: "***Whom seek ye?***" He remains completely composed even as the arresting party has just witnessed an overwhelming display of His power. The repetition also makes clear that they intend to arrest Jesus Himself, setting the stage for His protection of the disciples.

Not "Slain in the Spirit": There is a pointed distinction here. The soldiers falling backward is not an example of the modern charismatic practice sometimes called being "slain in the Spirit." These were hostile men confronting Christ's divine authority, not worshippers. They fell before the power of His name.

Jesus was never forcibly captured; He voluntarily delivered Himself. At any moment, He could have ended the proceedings. It was not the nails that held Jesus to the Cross—His love for us did (John 10:17–18; Matt. 26:53–54; Eph. 5:2). Here we see armed men involuntarily falling before the Messiah they intend to arrest. Scripture declares that a day is coming very soon when "***every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."*** The temporary display of His authority in Gethsemane anticipates His ultimate vindication and universal recognition.

John 18:8-9] "*Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none."*

Notice who is giving the orders. Jesus, the intended prisoner, commands the arresting party to release His disciples. **They were about to bind His hands, but He bound theirs first.** The soldiers had come prepared to seize Jesus and potentially His followers, yet they must submit to His authority (Mark 14:51–52).

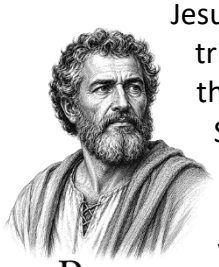
John explicitly connects this moment to Jesus' earlier declarations about those the Father entrusted to Him. T**he Good Shepherd willingly gives Himself over to His enemies while keeping His sheep safe**.

John 18:10-11 *"Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"*

Peter has just seen an armed force fall back at Jesus' declaration of "***I AM,***" yet he responds impulsively by reaching for a sword. Luke records that the disciples possessed two swords, which was unlawful on a feast day, and Peter now uses one against Malchus, the high priest's servant.



Peter's weapon was a short, heavy sword, approximately eighteen inches long, designed for powerful chopping blows rather than delicate cutting. The Greek suggests that Peter's attack was anything but restrained. Peter was probably aiming for Malchus's head and missed! Only John names the servant, suggesting familiarity with those involved in the arrest, and Luke adds another detail: Jesus touched the injured man's ear and healed him.


Peter

Jesus immediately rebukes Peter and commands him to put away his weapon. Peter tries to prevent the very sacrifice Jesus came to accomplish. Christ reminds him that He could call on heavenly forces if He wished, but doing so would contradict Scripture about His suffering (Matt. 26:52–54). Peter's impulsive attack could easily have resulted in his immediate execution by the Roman soldiers. By healing Malchus, Jesus removes the immediate consequences of Peter's violent act. This healing is Jesus' final recorded miracle before the Crucifixion (Luke 22:51).



The Cups of Scripture: The cup is a recurring biblical symbol representing a person's appointed portion, whether blessing, suffering, or divine judgment. Jesus' question, "***Shall I not drink it?***" reveals His complete submission to the Father's will. The cup awaiting Him (the Cup of Wrath) includes the suffering of the Cross and the divine judgment against sin that He will bear as our substitute. The One who knew no sin willingly accepted our consequences (Isa. 53:4–6, 10; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24).

The Six Trials

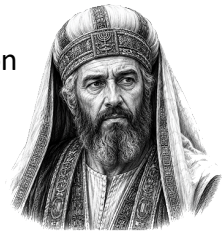
Jewish Trials	Roman Trials
Before Annas - John 18:12-14	Before Pilate - John 18:28-38
Before Caiaphas - John 18:19-24	Before Herod - Luke 23:6-11
Before the Sanhedrin - Matthew 27:1,2	Before Pilate - John 18:39-19:16

John 18:12-13] *"Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year."*


Annas

With the arrest complete, Jesus was now bound and taken before **Annas**, the former high priest who still exercised considerable influence over Jerusalem's religious establishment. He served as high priest from approximately A.D. 6 to 15, before the Roman governor Valerius Gratus removed him from office. Nevertheless, many Jews resented the Roman meddling in their priestly office and looked to Annas as the "real" high priest. Either way, he remained the influential patriarch of a powerful priestly family, with his son-in-law **Caiaphas** holding the high priesthood position.

John 18:14-15] *"Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest."*


Caiaphas

Still before Annas, John deliberately reminds us of Caiaphas's earlier declaration in Chapter 11, after the raising of Lazarus, that **it was better for one man to die than for the entire nation to perish** (John 11:47–52). Remember that Caiaphas wanted to preserve the religious establishment and avoid Roman intervention. Yet John explains that God used his statement to announce Christ's greater purpose. Bringing Jesus before these men was meant to legitimize the proceedings, not to discover the truth, because the verdict had already **been reached and the sentence determined before the trial began**.

Who Was the Other Disciple in v. 15? Some commentators identify the unnamed disciple following along with Peter as John, the Gospel's author; however, I believe that is incorrect because he would have been named. Stronger speculation points to Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea; either would have connections with the establishment.

John 18:16] *"But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter."*

John 18:17-18] *"Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself."*

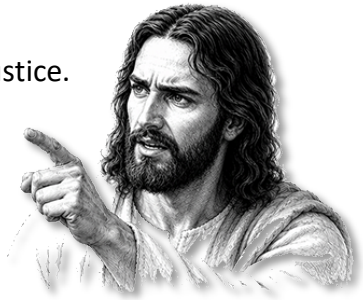
Peter initially remains outside the courtyard until the unnamed disciple speaks with the servant girl guarding the entrance. That disciple's familiarity with the high priest's household allows Peter to enter. As he passes the entrance, the servant girl asks Peter a simple question about his identity, and he responds with a direct denial: "***I am not***." This is **the first fulfillment** of Jesus' earlier prediction that Peter would deny Him three times.

Nevertheless, Peter joins the servants and officers warming themselves because of the cold night, trying to remain unnoticed among His enemies. Metaphorically, **following Christ "*afar off*" will soon result in chills and growing cold in our spiritual life.**

John 18:19-20] *"The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing."*

The high priest questions Jesus on two matters: **Jesus' followers and His teaching**. This questioning attempts to entrap Jesus rather than conduct an impartial examination. Here, Jesus exposes the fundamental injustice of their proceedings. **He had taught openly before the entire nation, and now is being interrogated behind closed doors by men who have already determined His guilt**.

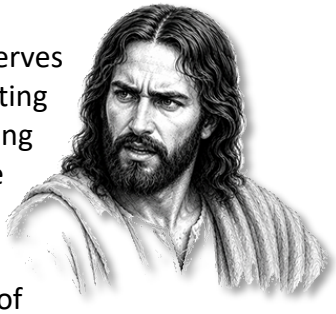
John 18:21-22] *"Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?"*



Jesus demands that the authorities follow the proper principles of justice. His teachings were public, and witnesses were readily available to testify concerning what He had said. However, examining the witnesses and presenting evidence would have drawn attention to this sham trial. Instead, an officer strikes Him across the face for questioning their procedure.

The Greek text contains an interesting detail. Although the KJV describes the officer striking Jesus with the palm of his hand, the expression can also **describe a blow delivered with a rod**. In Micah, we see a prophecy about the humiliation of Israel's ruler: Micah 5:1 declares, "**...they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.**"

John 18:23-24] *"Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest."*



Jesus challenges the officer to identify precisely what He said that deserves punishment, refusing to pretend injustice is acceptable. He is confronting their wrongdoing directly, calmly, and truthfully. Without establishing guilt, Annas then sends Jesus, still bound, to Caiaphas, moving the proceedings forward.

As with most of the Gospel, John's wording connects to the broader sequence of Jewish proceedings. The other Gospels supply details of the accusations, false witnesses, and condemnation before Caiaphas and the council. John concentrates upon the injustice of the interrogation and the subsequent Roman proceedings.

A bit more about Caiaphas. His given name was Joseph, and he held the high priesthood approximately A.D. 18–36. Drawing upon Josephus and later rabbinic accounts, he describes Caiaphas and the priestly establishment as deeply entangled in political intrigue and corruption. Their religious offices provided an appearance of legitimacy, but their treatment of Jesus exposed their true character.

John 18:25] *"And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not."*

John 18:26-27] *"One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew."*

While Jesus stands before the religious authorities, Peter remains outside warming himself among the servants and officers. His first denial exposes his weak self-confidence, but two more confrontations follow quickly, and with the third **the rooster crows—confirming that Christ knew Peter's failure before Peter could imagine it**. These events occur around 3:00 a.m., during the third watch of the night.

Mark records Jesus predicting that Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed twice, while John emphasizes the crowing immediately following the third denial. Roosters ordinarily crow repeatedly, so these accounts describe the same fulfillment without requiring separate sets of denials.

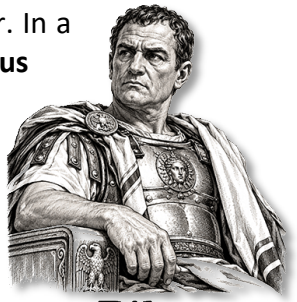
Five Practical Lessons From Peter's Failure:

1. **The danger of self-confidence.** Peter failed in the very courage he considered his greatest strength (Prov. 16:18; 1 Cor. 10:12).
2. **The consequences of prayerlessness.** Peter slept when Jesus instructed him to watch and pray (Matt. 26:40–41).
3. **The perils of companionship.** Peter sought safety among those who opposed his Lord (Ps. 1:1; John 18:18).
4. **The fear of men.** A servant girl's question accomplished what an armed force could not (Prov. 29:25; John 18:17).
5. **The weakness of human determination.** Good intentions cannot replace dependence upon God's strength (Zech. 4:6; 2 Cor. 12:9).

John 18:28] *"Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover."*

The Jewish leadership could condemn Jesus religiously, but **Roman authority controlled the execution of capital sentences** in this setting. This explains why the proceedings have to move from Caiaphas to Pontius Pilate.

It is still early morning, and the religious leaders refuse to enter the Roman judgment hall because they fear ceremonial defilement before Passover. In a twist of extreme irony, **they are meticulously observing religious regulations while arranging the execution of their own Messiah**.


Pilate

Pontius Pilate

Pontius Pilate governed Judea from approximately A.D. 26–36. Archaeological inscriptions at Caesarea that identify Pilate provide historical confirmation of this Roman official. Josephus also records Pilate's controversial use of Temple funds for an aqueduct and his violent suppression of the resulting protests.

John 18:29-30] *"Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee."*

John 18:31-32] *"Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die."*

Pilate comes outside to accommodate the religious leaders, who refuse to enter the Roman Praetorium because of their ceremonial concerns. His opening question is straightforward: what specific crime has Jesus committed? Roman judicial procedure required an identifiable accusation.

The religious leaders expect Pilate to authorize an execution, but instead he demands the evidence. Rather than present hard evidence, they effectively tell Pilate to trust their judgment because he is a malefactor. The Greek word (kakopoios), translated as "***malefactor***," describes an evildoer or criminal. But Pilate refuses to act merely as the executioner of the religious council's decision. Instead, he tells them to handle the matter according to their own law, placing responsibility back upon those who brought the accusation. Their reply reveals what they truly want: not simply a religious judgment, **but a death sentence carried out under Roman authority**.

Three Requirements of Roman Justice: Roman judicial procedure had three requirements that Pilate's opening question brings into focus:



1. **A specific indictment:** The accused must be charged with an identifiable offense.
2. **Accusers brought before the accused:** The allegations must be open to examination. (Acts 25:16)
3. **An opportunity for defense:** The accused must be permitted to answer the charges. (Acts 25:16)

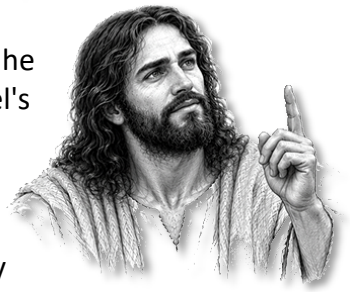
Since the Jews cannot meet the requirements of Roman justice, Pilate is effectively telling them: ***this is a religious dispute involving your own laws; handle it yourselves***. But the Jewish leaders respond that they lack the legal authority to impose the death penalty, which would be stoning under the Mosaic Law. That forces the case back into Roman hands. These events are moving toward what Jesus had specifically foretold: **that He would be lifted up**, **identifying the manner of His death, Roman crucifixion**. Crucifixion was a humiliating and brutal punishment.

John 18:33-34] *"Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?"*

Pilate now moves into the Praetorium to question Jesus personally, shifting the proceedings from religious accusations to political kingship. The motive: **The Roman governor wants to know whether Jesus represents a threat to Caesar's authority**. This exchange occurs during Pilate's first private examination of Jesus.

Jesus' response forces Pilate to decide whether he is examining the evidence himself or accepting the conclusions of those who brought Jesus to him. The distinction matters because Pilate's political understanding of kingship differs fundamentally from the Jewish leaders'.

John 18:35-36] *"Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."*



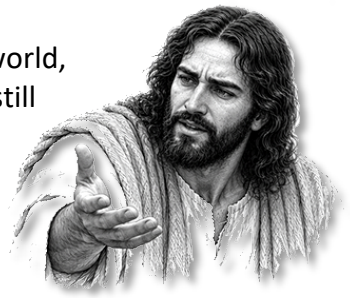
Pilate's response, "***Am I a Jew?***" reveals his irritation with what he considers an internal Jewish dispute. He has little interest in Israel's messianic expectations. Pilate cannot understand the extraordinary hostility directed against Jesus, and so far has not established a crime deserving Roman punishment.

Jesus clears up the matter. He declares that His Kingdom's authority does not originate from the present world system. If it did, He would allow his servants to fight to prevent His arrest.

The contrast reveals **the two great phases of Messiah's mission**:

- **First Coming:** The suffering Servant offers Himself as the sacrifice for sin (Isa. 53:5–7).
- **Second Coming:** The conquering King establishes His righteous government over the nations (Ps. 2:6–9; Rev. 19:15).

John 18:37] *"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."*



Pilate has just heard Jesus declare that His kingdom is not of this world, yet he recognizes that **Jesus claims to be a king**. The governor is still investigating a potential political rival to Caesar.

Jesus explains why He was born and why He entered the world—to bear witness to the truth. His answer affirms His kingship while refusing to let Pilate define it according to Roman political expectations.

Jesus identifies His birth and His coming into the world as purposeful, fulfilling God's predetermined redemptive plan. His mission is to bear witness to the truth. Those who belong to the truth recognize and respond to His voice. **Pilate now faces the same decision every hearer of the Gospel must make – Who is Christ?**

John 18:38] *"Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all."*

Jesus has brought the conversation to a much greater issue: the existence and authority of divine truth. Pilate asks the question, "***What is Truth?***" but does not wait for Jesus to respond and immediately returns outside to address the religious authorities, finding no basis for condemning Him. Pilate's declaration should have ended the proceedings. Instead, Pilate continues searching for a politically acceptable solution and walks away from the very source of the truth.



John 18:39-40] *"But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber."*

Pilate has declared Jesus innocent, but instead of releasing Him, he attempts to escape responsibility by appealing to a Passover custom. He offers the crowd a choice between Jesus, the rightful King of Israel, and Barabbas, a convicted criminal associated with rebellion. This is Pilate's third attempt to secure Jesus' release. The religious leaders and the crowd choose Barabbas, rejecting the innocent Messiah for a guilty man. **The scene becomes a remarkable picture of substitution: the guilty man walks free while the sinless Son of God moves toward the Cross** (Matt. 27:15–26; Mark 15:6–15; Luke 23:18–25).

The Illegal Trials of Jesus — A Synopsis of Legal Irregularities

1. Irregularities During the Arrest

- ✓ **Unlawful binding:** Jesus was bound before conviction despite offering no resistance (John 18:12, 24).
- ✓ **Improper participation:** Judicial authorities participated in arranging the arrest (John 18:3).
- ✓ **Use of a traitor:** Judas facilitated the arrest, contrary to principles of justice (John 18:5; Ex. 23:6–8).
- ✓ **Weapons on a feast day:** Armed officers participated in the arrest during the festival (John 18:3).

2. Illegal Timing and Location

- ✓ **Night proceedings:** Legal trials were not permitted to be conducted at night (John 18:28).
- ✓ Feast-day proceedings: Court sessions were prohibited during religious festivals (John 18:28).
- ✓ Improper location: Proceedings occurred in Caiaphas' residence rather than the designated council chamber (John 18:13–16).
- ✓ **Improper sentencing location:** The sentence should have been pronounced in the Temple's Hall of Hewn Stone (John 18:28).

3. Violations of Evidence and Witness Requirements

- ✓ **False witnesses:** The authorities actively sought testimony against Jesus (Matt. 26:59; Mark 14:56).
- ✓ **Conflicting testimony:** The witnesses failed to agree, which should have resulted in release (Mark 14:56–59).
- ✓ **No defense witnesses:** Nobody was called to testify on Jesus' behalf.
- ✓ **Self-incrimination:** Jesus' own testimony was used to condemn Him, contrary to Missler's description of Jewish judicial procedure (Matt. 26:63–65).
- ✓ **Presumption of innocence ignored:** The required testimony of two agreeing witnesses was never established (John 11:53; Mark 14:59; Deut. 19:15).

4. Judicial Misconduct

- ✓ **Improper preliminary hearing:** Jesus was examined before Annas, contrary to the judicial process Missler describes (John 18:13).
- ✓ **Failure to protect the accused:** The judges neglected their obligation to safeguard Jesus' legal rights (John 18:14, 22-23).

- ✓ **Violence permitted:** Jesus was struck during questioning without judicial intervention (John 18:22–23).
- ✓ **Verdict without evidence:** The authorities proceeded toward condemnation without establishing a lawful case (John 18:30).

5. Improper Verdict and Sentencing Procedures

- ✓ **Same-day condemnation:** A guilty verdict required a subsequent day and a majority of at least two, unlike an acquittal (Matt. 26:65–66).
- ✓ **Improper voting:** Missler states that voting should have proceeded individually, beginning with the youngest, rather than simultaneously (Matt. 26:66).
- ✓ **Lack of capital authority:** The Jewish court did not possess the necessary civil authority to carry out the death sentence (John 18:31).

6. Caiaphas tore his garments after Jesus acknowledged His messianic identity. The law prohibits the high priest from tearing his official garments. He further notes the contradiction between exercising priestly authority to place Jesus under oath and violating that office's requirements (Lev. 21:10; Matt. 26:63–65).

Despite the six proceedings, the authorities (Roman and Jewish) never establish a legitimate basis for executing Jesus. Pilate repeatedly acknowledges His innocence yet ultimately yields to the pressure demanding His crucifixion (Luke 23:14–15, 22).

Next Lesson: Read John 19. We will finish Christ's interchange with Pilate. Then we will cover the crucifixion, Pilate's controversial epitaph, and Christ's burial.

JOHN CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

D L U O H S S D O N E K O P S O	ANNAS	KNOWING
W G T A G C A W H C H C R U S R	BOUND	MALCHUS
C H N N N C H E O T H T A T P E	BROOK	PALACE
U O I I R N D I A R L W S L N T	CEDRON	PETER
H H U I W I A E E U D E O T A E	CHIEF	PRIESTS
T I E N B O H S O F I T E R G P	COMETH	SHEATH
F H T N S S N I H R T R E M D O	COUNSEL	SHOULD
T O S H O E D K P N E A C I G S	DRINK	SIMON
S N R I E Y L T W D J A R P D N	ENTERED	SPOKEN
U A G T N R O I P E O E H M A D	FORTH	STOOD
H I S D H R E K S J A I S M O N	GARDEN	SWORD
C A R T C B N P U Y B P S U O U	GROUND	THEIR
L E V H O I R D H O T I O R S O	HAVING	THINGS
A S E I R O A O U A M E D N M R	HITHER	TORCHES
M S O D N S D N O O C E D L S G	JESUS	WEAPONS
N E D R A G D U N K C O M E T H	JUDAS	WORDS

Appendix

The O.T. Blueprint of the Arrest and Trials of Jesus: The Prophetic Fingerprints of John 18

The arrest and trials of Jesus were not unexpected events that interrupted God's plan. Centuries before Christ entered Jerusalem, the Old Testament had already revealed remarkable details concerning Messiah's betrayal, rejection, suffering, and ultimate sacrifice. John 18 demonstrates how these prophetic threads converge in a single night. (Isa. 53:3–10; Luke 24:44; Acts 2:23)

O.T. Passage	Prophetic Pattern	Fulfillment in John 18
Ps. 41:9	Betrayed by a trusted companion	Judas leads the arresting party to Jesus. (John 18:2–3)
Ps. 55:12–14	Betrayal by a familiar friend	One of the Twelve becomes the instrument of betrayal. (John 18:2–5)
Zech. 13:7	The Shepherd is smitten; the sheep scatter	Jesus is arrested while His disciples are permitted to depart. (John 18:8–9; Matt. 26:56)
Isa. 50:6	Messiah submits to physical abuse	Jesus is struck during His examination. (John 18:22–23)
Isa. 53:7	The suffering Servant submits without resistance	Jesus willingly surrenders and refuses armed defense. (John 18:4–11)
Ps. 35:11	False witnesses rise against the righteous	Religious authorities seek testimony to condemn Jesus. (Matt. 26:59–60)
Ps. 69:4	Hatred without a legitimate cause	Pilate examines Jesus and finds no fault in Him. (John 18:38)
Isa. 53:3	Messiah is despised and rejected	The crowd demands Barabbas instead of Jesus. (John 18:39–40)
Isa. 53:5–6	The innocent Servant bears the guilt of others	Barabbas is released while Jesus proceeds toward the Cross. (John 18:40; 19:16)

The Integrated Message: Different Old Testament authors wrote these passages across many centuries, yet their themes converge on the arrest and condemnation of Jesus Christ. The betrayal, the scattering of the disciples, the unjust proceedings, the suffering of the innocent, and the rejection of the Messiah all fit into a larger prophetic design. John records historical events that unfold according to God's predetermined counsel and foreknowledge (Luke 24:25–27; Acts 2:23; 4:27–28).

The Scepter Has Departed: Genesis 49:10 -

Genesis 49:10] "*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*"

Centuries before Christ's birth, Jacob prophesied that Judah would retain its governing authority until ***Shiloh*** came, a messianic title for the rightful ruler, i.e., Jesus Christ. The **scepter** symbolized judicial and governmental authority, including the right to administer capital punishment (Gen. 49:10; Ezek. 21:27).

When Judea came under direct Roman administration in A.D.6-7 and capital punishment was taken away from the Jews, the religious authorities believed the departure of the scepter meant God's promise had failed. **Little did they know, the promised Messiah (Shiloh) was already among them in Nazareth, and the prophecy was unfolding precisely as God intended**.