



# The Book of John

## Chapter 18

### March 25, 2018

**John 18:1-3** – *After saying these things, Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley with his disciples and entered a grove of olive trees. <sup>2</sup> Judas, the betrayer, knew this place, because Jesus had often gone there with his disciples. <sup>3</sup> The leading priests and Pharisees had given Judas a contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him. Now with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons, they arrived at the olive grove.*

The time has finally arrived for Jesus to complete the purpose for which he was sent to Earth as a man. He takes his disciples and crosses the Kidron Valley which is the valley on the eastern side of the city of Jerusalem separating the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives.

An interesting side note is that David fled from Absalom across this same valley when he was betrayed by his counselor Ahithophel, who later hangs himself which somewhat parallels the story unfolding now.

In the synoptic gospels, this olive grove is referred to as the Garden of Gethsemane.

**John 18:4-6** – *<sup>4</sup> Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward to meet them. “Who are you looking for?” he asked. <sup>5</sup> “Jesus the Nazarene,” they replied. “I AM he,” Jesus said. (Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.) <sup>6</sup> As Jesus said “I AM he,” they all drew back and fell to the ground!*

Jesus knows *exactly* what is going to happen to him yet he bravely plays out his part. When he announces “I AM he” he is asserting his divinity. The impact of his statement was so strong and dramatic that his accusers were literally knocked off their feet by it. Oh, how I wish I could have seen that!

**John 18:7-9** – *<sup>7</sup> Once more he asked them, “Who are you looking for?” And again they replied, “Jesus the Nazarene.” <sup>8</sup> “I told you that I AM he,” Jesus said. “And since I am the one you want, let these others go.” <sup>9</sup> He did this to fulfill his own statement: “I did not lose a single one of those you have given me.”*

Jesus submits to his pursuers but demonstrates his full control of the situation by commanding them to let the others go. He didn’t ask them if they could be let go, he told them to let them go.

**John 18:10-11** – *<sup>10</sup> Then Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest’s slave. <sup>11</sup> But Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword back into its sheath. Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given me?”*

Peter responds in his typical impetuous fashion. He had to know that he could not hope to defeat the soldiers who have come to take his Lord but that didn’t stop him from reacting. Oddly enough, it does not mention here like it does in Luke 22:51 that Jesus reached out and healed the man’s ear which would explain why Peter was neither arrested nor killed on the spot. In any case, I can identify with Peter in that he really wanted to serve his Lord well but often fell far short of the mark.



Figure 1: Kidron Valley as viewed today from the Old City of Jerusalem

**John 18:12-18** – <sup>12</sup> So the soldiers, their commanding officer, and the Temple guards arrested Jesus and tied him up. <sup>13</sup> First they took him to Annas, since he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest at that time. <sup>14</sup> Caiaphas was the one who had told the other Jewish leaders, “It’s better that one man should die for the people.”

John mentions here how Jesus was first taken to Annas which is not mentioned in the synoptic gospels. What is not explained here is that Annas was previously the high priest but was deposed by the Romans. His son-in-law Caiaphas was appointed in his place by the Roman prefect who proceeded Pontius Pilate, Valerius Gratus. Even so, Annas appears to still carry a lot of authority with the Jewish leaders.

<sup>15</sup> Simon Peter followed Jesus, as did another of the disciples. That other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, so he was allowed to enter the high priest’s courtyard with Jesus. <sup>16</sup> Peter had to stay outside the gate. Then the disciple who knew the high priest spoke to the woman watching at the gate, and she let Peter in. <sup>17</sup> The woman asked Peter, “You’re not one of that man’s disciples, are you?” “No,” he said, “I am not.” <sup>18</sup> Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself.

The other unnamed disciple is believed to be John himself. Although he writes humbly about himself, it was John who stayed by Jesus side the entire time. As he then uses his connections to get Peter inside the courtyard, Jesus’s prophetic words about Peter’s denial start to come true. Peter has his first denial of Christ. Before we judge him too harshly we must keep in mind that at this point Peter really has no idea if he might somehow be arrested and tried as well.

**John 18:19-21** – <sup>19</sup> Inside, the high priest began asking Jesus about his followers and what he had been teaching them. <sup>20</sup> Jesus replied, “Everyone knows what I teach. I have preached regularly in the synagogues and the Temple, where the people gather. I have not spoken in secret. <sup>21</sup> Why are you asking me this question? Ask those who heard me. They know what I said.”

This isn’t a trial rather it’s more like a police interrogation of Jesus. Annas tries to get Jesus to incriminate himself as a false prophet or even a false teacher but Jesus doesn’t take the bait. You can feel the disdain that Jesus felt for this man.

<sup>22</sup> Then one of the Temple guards standing nearby slapped Jesus across the face. “Is that the way to answer the high priest?” he demanded. <sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, “If I said anything wrong, you must prove it. But if I’m speaking the truth, why are you beating me?” <sup>24</sup> Then Annas bound Jesus and sent him to Caiaphas, the high priest.

Now, can you imagine the feeling this guard will have at the Judgment as he realizes just how poorly he treated the Son of God!

Annas realized that he wasn’t getting anywhere so he sent Jesus off to Caiaphas.

**John 18:25** – <sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, they asked him again, “You’re not one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it, saying, “No, I am not.”

Peter once again denies Christ. This illustrates how there are two kinds of threats we typically face as Christians.

The first type of threat is bold, threatening or mocking and directly attacks us. “Deny your Christianity or die!” can be heard in the Middle East or “It’s one thing to talk to Jesus. It’s another thing when Jesus talks to you. That’s called mental illness, if I’m not correct, hearing voices” can be heard on prime-time television. They’re very confrontational and easy to recognize.

The second type of threat is more subtle and at times almost seductive. The passive aggressive threat can often be the more difficult one with which to deal. Sure, threats of death and ridicule harm our bodies and our pride but not our souls. But, when we succumb to subtle threats they can erode our relationship with God. This type

of threat promises reward or acceptance for our betrayal not punishment for failure to relent. It also makes us seem like the bad guy or we're "being petty" when we stand up to threats that are not as openly threatening.

<sup>26</sup> *But one of the household slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?"* <sup>27</sup> *Again Peter denied it. And immediately a rooster crowed.*

Peter's third denial. It's just a little white lie saying "no," right? God knows how I really feel, right?

**John 18:28** – <sup>28</sup> *Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor. His accusers didn't go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover.*

How ironic that the Jewish leaders refused to enter the Roman headquarters because they would be defiled when the actions for which they came there were what really defiled them!

**John 18:29-32** – <sup>29</sup> *So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, "What is your charge against this man?"* <sup>30</sup> *"We wouldn't have handed him over to you if he weren't a criminal!" they retorted.* <sup>31</sup> *"Then take him away and judge him by your own law," Pilate told them. "Only the Romans are permitted to execute someone," the Jewish leaders replied.* <sup>32</sup> *(This fulfilled Jesus' prediction about the way he would die.)*

Pilate was the fifth prefect of the Roman province of Judaea. Part of his job as prefect was to govern and keep the people in his region in line. These people included the Israelites. Of course, anyone familiar with Jewish history knows this is no small task as the Jews had a hard enough time following God much less some earthly over-seer.

The Jewish leaders present Jesus to Pilate and seem offended that Pilate didn't just take their word for it that Jesus was guilty. Pilate shrewdly tries to keep out of the local legal matters and encourages them to handle the issue themselves. But, they protest by saying that Rome doesn't allow them to execute anyone. This forces Pilate to go back inside and interrogate Jesus himself.

**John 18:33-36** – <sup>33</sup> *Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked him.* <sup>34</sup> *Jesus replied, "Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?"* <sup>35</sup> *"Am I a Jew?" Pilate retorted. "Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?"* <sup>36</sup> *Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world."*

Jesus quietly deflects Pilate's questions. Why would he do that? It's possible that Jesus is being careful to avoid swaying Pilate from the course that must play out. After all, even the act of Jesus just merely mentioning that he is, "I AM HE," had the effect of knocking his accusers down.

You'll also notice that Jesus also did not respond like a man being accused would normally react. He didn't scramble to deny the charges against him nor did he rail against his accusers to contradict their lies. Instead, he responded calmly with straight-forward facts.

Jesus presents an opportunity for Pilate to ask, "where is your Kingdom from, then?" Unfortunately, Pilate didn't pick up on this and Jesus also didn't force it upon him. We should approach witnessing to people that same way. It's not our job to force the truth upon them, we should just merely present the Truth before them and let the Spirit work on their hearts.

**John 18:37-38a** – <sup>37</sup> *Pilate said, "So you are a king?" Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true."* <sup>38a</sup> *"What is truth?" Pilate asked.*

Even in the midst of being greatly persecuted, Jesus is concerned about the spiritual state of those around him. This is a lesson from which we can all learn. The world can and will do evil things to us but we can't let that affect how we try to reach out to those who are lost. But, like was shown in Pilate's reaction, we must be prepared for cynicism and rejection and roll with the punches.

**John 18:38b-40** – <sup>38b</sup> *Then he went out again to the people and told them, "He is not guilty of any crime. <sup>39</sup> But you have a custom of asking me to release one prisoner each year at Passover. Would you like me to release this 'King of the Jews'?"* <sup>40</sup> *But they shouted back, "No! Not this man. We want Barabbas!" (Barabbas was a revolutionary.)*

Pilate could obviously see that Jesus was innocent and looked for a way to release Jesus. We also know from the book of Matthew that Pilate was warned by his wife to "have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream." And, is it also possible that Pilate's cynical responses were actually masking his true reaction to Jesus' words?

Either way, in an attempt to get Jesus released Pilate gives the people a chance to free Jesus by putting him up against another notorious prisoner and asking them to choose one to release. But, we also find from the book of Matthew that the Jesus leaders stirred the crowd up to call for Barabbas to be released sealing Jesus' fate. In Chapter 19 we will get into the gritty details of the crucifixion.