

John – An In-Depth Study

[Part 19]

John 18:1-11 [NIV] “When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it. Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’ ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘I am he,’ Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, ‘I am he,’ they drew back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’ And they said, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ ‘I told you that I am he,’ Jesus answered. ‘If you are looking for me, then let these men go.’ This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: ‘I have not lost one of those you gave me.’ Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.) Jesus commanded Peter, ‘Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?’”

At the Passover time it was full moon, the night was almost daylight, yet the enemies of Jesus came with lamps and torches. Why? They must have thought that Jesus would hide. Yet the very opposite happened, Jesus went to them. The man they thought was hiding actually came to meet them, showing glorious, defiant courage.

Jesus showed His authority over the situation. As He stepped forward all the guards and Roman soldiers and temple guards drew back and fell to the ground. One man facing scores of armed soldiers. That’s real courage and authority.

This falling back may be due to Jesus’ presence striking dread into all who faced Him, as He declared His divinity. [**Exodus 3:14**]

Jesus’ request for His disciples shows His continual concern for others, a protective love for His friends.

This also shows that Jesus chose to die.

It shows Jesus’ utter obedience to His Father’s will, He was faithful unto death.

There is one person in this account we should not overlook.

Peter, one man who drew his sword to defend his friend and Master against scores of fully armed soldiers.

Peter would soon deny his Master and we may look on him as a coward and failure, but we must not forget this sublime courage shown at this moment in his life.

John 18:12-14 [NIV] “Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people.”

This was an ecclesiastical trial of Jesus.

When the Jews were free from outside influence, the office of high priest was for life.

Under Roman rule this office was given to the highest bidder and one most likely to toe the line with the Roman governor, an arch-collaborator with Rome.

The family of Annas was immensely rich and one after another had bribed their way into office, while Annas remained the power behind it all.

Annas was the money-making power behind the sellers and money changers in the temple court, that Jesus had attacked. With that background we can see why Annas arranged to see Jesus first, even though it was the middle of the night. Annas wanted to gloat over the capture discomfort and defeat of this disturbing Galilean.

The examination of Jesus before Annas was a mockery of justice. Annas violated the principles of Jewish law when he questioned Jesus.

John 18:19-24 [NIV] *“Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ‘I have spoken openly to the world,’ Jesus replied. ‘I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.’ When Jesus said this, one of the officials near by struck him in the face. ‘Is this the way you answer the high priest?’ he demanded. ‘If I said something wrong,’ Jesus replied, ‘testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?’ Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest.”*

The Jewish law stated you could **not** convict a person by his own confession, but on the oath of two or more witnesses.

This is why Jesus reminded Annas he was in breach of Jewish law in the way He was being questioned. Also Annas was **not** the presiding high priest but the power behind Caiaphas who was presiding high priest.

John 18:15-27 [NIV] *“Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest’s courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in. ‘You are not one of his disciples, are you?’ the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, ‘I am not.’ It was cold, and the servants and officials stood round a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself. Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ‘I have spoken openly to the world,’ Jesus replied. ‘I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.’ When Jesus said this, one of the officials near by struck him in the face. ‘Is this the way you answer the high priest?’ he demanded. ‘If I said something wrong,’ Jesus replied, ‘testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?’ Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest. As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, ‘You are not one of his disciples, are you?’ He denied it, saying, ‘I am not.’ One of the high priest’s servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, ‘Didn’t I see you with him in the olive grove?’ Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a cock began to crow.”*

The other disciple was most likely John the author of this gospel. Although John’s acquaintance with the high priest is difficult to explain.

One explanation could be that John’s father had a very flourishing fishing business because he could afford to employ hired servants. [**Mark 1:20**] One of the great Galilean industries was the salt fish industry, salted fish being a staple article of diet. John’s family could very well have supplied the household of high priest so John would be well-known by the servants of that household.

Nevertheless, had it **not** been John his name would most likely have been mentioned. It was through this disciple that Peter had access to the courtyard, but this led to Peter’s first denial.

The account of Peter’s second and third denial in which John refers to Malchus’ [**v10**] kinsman shows the author’s close knowledge of the event.

We can easily get angry with the members of the Jewish Sanhedrin for their misuse of justice in condemning Jesus.

But we must **not** forget that Peter denied any knowledge of Jesus and the rest of the disciples fled at Jesus' arrest [**Matthew 26:56**] and consider the pain this must have caused Jesus.

Most of us are not like the Jewish religious leaders, but we are all like the disciples. All of us have been guilty of denying that Jesus is our Lord in vital areas of our life.

Or we are guilty of keeping secret our identity as believers in times of outside pressure.

Imagine seeing the man whom you have come to believe is the long-awaited Messiah being abused and beaten.

Naturally Peter was confused and afraid.

It is a serious sin to disown Jesus Christ, but Jesus forgave Peter. [**John 21:15-17**]

No sin is too great for Jesus to forgive it, if we truly repent and seek forgiveness.

John 18:28-37 [NIV] *“Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate came out to them and asked, ‘What charges are you bringing against this man?’ ‘If he were not a criminal,’ they replied, ‘we would not have handed him over to you.’ Pilate said, ‘Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.’ ‘But we have no right to execute anyone,’ the Jews objected. This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled. Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ ‘Is that your own idea,’ Jesus asked, ‘or did others talk to you about me?’ ‘Am I a Jew?’ Pilate replied. ‘It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?’ Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.’ ‘You are a king, then!’ said Pilate. Jesus answered, ‘You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.’”*

The irony of the Jewish scruples is highlighted by John, they were ready to misuse justice and their own laws to murder Jesus but did not want to be seen to defile their religious rituals.

Pilate asked a reasonable question, what is the charge?

The Jewish leadership's answer evaded the question but did reveal their insolence.

The Sanhedrin had the power to condemn a person to death, but was required to obtain the sanction of the Roman authorities. Since Jesus had predicted His death by crucifixion, events were being overruled in the fulfilment of this prediction.

Pilate was asking the question, are you a king? Not as a Roman governor, but reflecting the Jewish religious ruler the Messiah, a spiritual kingship.

Jesus' reply satisfied Pilate that the Roman rulership was **not** threatened, so he handed back Jesus to the Jewish religious leaders.

Pilate's perplexity is revealed in what could be a scornful remark, *“you are a king then.”*

Spiritual realities were unintelligible to Pilate, but truth was something that Greeks and Romans debated.

John 18:38-40 [NIV] *“‘What is truth?’ Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, ‘I find no basis for a charge against him. But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release “the king of the Jews”?’ They shouted back, ‘No, not him! Give us Barabbas!’ Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.”*

Pilate’s own judgement was that Jesus was innocent. Yet Pilate’s proposition to the Jews about the custom of release, shows weakness of character, but was made in sarcasm for he called Jesus *“king of the Jews.”*

Barabbas was a murderer and a rebel against Roman authority, so a probable hero among the Jews.

Barabbas’ rebellion had failed yet he was released instead of Jesus, the Only One who could truly help Israel. Barabbas who was released was guilty of the very crime that Jesus was accused of. [**Luke 23:13-14**]

Who was Barabbas?

Jewish men had names that identified them with their fathers, for example Simon Peter is called Simon son of Jonah. [**Matthew 16:17**]

Barabbas is never identified by his father’s name, and the name mentioned is not much help either.

Barabbas is son of Abba or son of daddy, he could have been anybody’s son, and that is just the point.

We too are sinners and rebels against God and deserve death. [**Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23**]

But Jesus has died in our place, for our sins, and we have been set free.

We don’t have to be important people to accept our freedom in Christ, God adopts us all thanks to Jesus and we have the right to call Him *“Abba”*. [**Galatians 4:4-6**]

John 19:1-16 [NIV] *“Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ And they struck him in the face. Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, ‘Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him.’ When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, ‘Here is the man!’ As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, ‘Crucify! Crucify!’ But Pilate answered, ‘You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him.’ The Jews insisted, ‘We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.’ When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. ‘Where do you come from?’ he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. ‘Do you refuse to speak to me?’ Pilate said. ‘Don’t you realise I have power either to free you or to crucify you?’ Jesus answered, ‘You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.’ From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, ‘If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.’ When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge’s seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. ‘Here is your king,’ Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, ‘Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!’ ‘Shall I crucify your king?’ Pilate asked. ‘We have no king but Caesar,’ the chief priests answered. Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.”*

Scourging could have killed Jesus as it did many men. The soldiers went beyond their orders by mocking His claim to royalty by placing a crown of thorns on His head and a royal robe on His shoulders.

Scourging was normally a part of the examination but Pilate’s use of it was arbitrary and unjustified.

It is most probable that Pilate regarded the scourging as an alternative to crucifixion [Luke 23:16] and is supported by again declaring the innocence of Jesus.

“*Here is the man,*” there is no knowing what significance Pilate attached to this statement.

The Greek words used by Pilate were “*anthrōdos*” which is the normal words for a human being, but Greek thinkers were using this term for the ideal, perfect pattern of manhood, the heavenly man.

This could reflect the growing respect that Pilate had for Jesus, in His humble acceptance He had for what was happening to Him physically and mentally.

Pilate continued to try to release Jesus and the Jewish authorities desired to murder Him by using whatever false accusation would cause Pilate to give the order for Jesus to be crucified.

Throughout this trial we see that Jesus was in charge **not** Pilate or the Jewish religious leaders.

Really it was Pilate and the Jewish leaders who were on trial, depicting all humanity and human leadership, right through every generation of human history.

It was out of self-preservation that the frightened Pilate gave in to the crowd and handed over Jesus to be crucified.

Pilate’s record was such that he could **not** allow any report of this kind reaching the Emperor [Luke 13:1].

The Jewish leaders were so desperate to get rid of Jesus that, despite their intense hatred for Rome, they said Caesar was their only king.

How ironic that they feigned allegiance to Rome while rejecting their own Messiah!

Their own words condemned them, for God was to be their only true king, and they had abandoned every trace of loyalty to Him.

The priests had truly lost their reason for existence, instead of turning people to God, they claimed allegiance to Rome in order to murder their Messiah.

John 19:17-30 [NIV] *“Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). Here they crucified him, and with him two others, one on each side and Jesus in the middle. Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, ‘Do not write “The King of the Jews”, but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.’ Pilate answered, ‘What I have written, I have written.’ When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. ‘Let’s not tear it,’ they said to one another. ‘Let’s decide by lot who will get it.’ This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, ‘They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.’ So this is what the soldiers did. Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing near by, he said to his mother, ‘Dear woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”*

Jesus was regarded by Roman soldiers as a common criminal because He bore His own cross.

Simon's help is **not** mentioned by John [Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26] but the transfer must have happened on the way to Golgotha, nor does John mention that the other two crucified with Jesus were on charges of sedition.

John does tell us that it was Pilate who prepared and caused the title to be placed on the cross, which caused resentful protests among the Jews.

The garments of a condemned man were the prerequisite of the soldiers on duty, and John sees the fulfilment of **Psalms 22:18**.

Even while dying in agony on the cross, Jesus was concerned about His family, He instructed John to take care of His mother Mary.

Mary, whose husband must have been dead by this time, we must ask why did Jesus **not** assign this task to His brothers?

As the oldest son Jesus entrusted His mother to a man who stayed with Him at the cross, His close friend John, and His cousin being a child of Salome who was the wife of Zebedee.

Salome had received a very stern rebuff from Jesus when she asked for elevated positions in His Kingdom for her two sons [Matthew 20:20-23] and yet she was there at the cross.

Salome's presence says much for her loving humility to accept and rebuke yet remain devoted to Jesus.

Salome's presence is a lesson to us how to receive a warning and rebuke from God or His true servants.

Mary from Magdala was also at the cross, she could never forget what Jesus had done for her. [Mark 16:9; Luke 8:1-2]

Mary the mother of James the younger whose husband was Clopas the brother of Joseph the husband of Mary, Christ's mother.

John records that Jesus just before His death cried out "I am thirsty", the thought behind this was to counter one of the tenets of Gnosticism, that spirit was altogether good and physical matter is altogether evil.

From this Gnosticism concluded –

God in His pure spirit could never take on a physical body that was evil.

Therefore Jesus never had a real body.

Jesus was only a phantom in human form who never really experienced real pain.

Gnostics thought they were honouring Jesus, when they were destroying Jesus' mission from the Father.

To redeem human beings Jesus had to become human, to become what we are for us to become like Him.

John stresses the fact that Jesus was thirsty to show that Jesus was human and really underwent the pain and agony of the cross. [Psalms 69:21]

John 19:31-37 [NIV] *"Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the*

legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: 'Not one of his bones will be broken,' and, as another scripture says, 'They will look on the one they have pierced.'"

The Romans did **not** bury the bodies of criminals who were crucified, they simply took them down and threw them away to let the vultures, crows and dogs feed upon them.

But the Jewish law was different –

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 [NIV] *"If a man guilty of a capital offence is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance."*

A grim method was used to despatch criminals who lingered on, their limbs were broken so that they slumped on the cross and then unable to breathe and suffocate almost immediately.

Jesus was already dead when the Roman soldiers came to Him. They spared this process which fulfilled **Numbers 9:12** which states that no bones of the Passover lamb [the Lamb of God] should be broken.

Although Jesus was already dead, one of the Roman soldiers made sure by thrusting a spear into His side which fulfilled **Zachariah 12:10**.

To John this was the final, unanswerable proof that Jesus was a real human with a real body, an answer to the Gnostics' idea of phantoms and spirits and an unreal manhood of Jesus.

The blood and water are symbolic of two sacraments of the Christian faith.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper when blood red wine is drunk.

The sacrament of baptism when the old life dies with Jesus in our watery grave and we begin a new life of serving Jesus and God the Father. [**Romans 6:1-11**]

We have the witness of an impartial Roman soldier that Jesus died on cross. [**Mark 15:44-45**]

The graphic details of Jesus' death are especially important in John's record because He was an eyewitness.

Jesus died as the lambs for the Passover meal were being slain, making Jesus, the Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all humans. [1 Corinthians 5:7]