

## **Humanity Redeemed**

### **Week 4 - The Garden and the Courtyard**

#### **John 18:1-27**

Our study has brought us to Jesus' arrest and the mock trials that would precede the cross. John passed over many details, leaving the accounts of those events to the other Gospel writers. John never intended his Gospel to chronicle Jesus' earthly mission. Rather, his purpose was to emphasize the person of Christ in a way that underscored His deity (John 20:30-31).

Jesus concluded His prayer. The disciples must have felt comforted and encouraged as they leaned into the holy hush of the moment. They had no way of knowing the evil forces mounting up against the Lord or how they would be caught up in the aftermath. Even as Jesus was speaking to them, Judas, the Roman cohort, the commander, and the officers of the Jews (John 18:12) were making their way to arrest the Lord.

A Roman cohort numbered somewhere around 600 men, and generally included infantry and cavalry. The Sanhedrin had also dispatched a contingent of temple police. A group of high-ranking Pharisees strode along in the mix. In addition, there were a smattering of morbid curiosity-seekers, both Jews and Gentiles, among the throng being led by Judas. "With lanterns and torches and weapons" (John 18:3) the mob approached, bent on taking Jesus by force.

#### **I. The Arrest - John 18:1-11**

Jesus was expecting the throng which was being led by Judas. He approached Jesus and betrayed Him with a kiss, the predetermined sign (Matthew 26:47-50; Mark 14:43-45; Luke 22:47-48). "Who do you seek?" Jesus asked as He positioned Himself between His disciples and the angry mob. They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene" (John 18:5). This was intended as an insult. In Judean eyes, it was bad enough to be a Galilean, but to be from Nazareth - that was considered to be pathetic! Jesus responded, "I am He." At His response, hundreds of well-trained military men fell to the ground in the presence of the Almighty (This is a pre-cursor of Armageddon when Jesus will defeat His enemies with a word from His mouth. See Revelation 19:11-19), proving how worthless the might of Rome was against Him. Jesus could have called down "twelve legions of angels" (Matthew 26:53) to rescue Him. But He would not. He was fully surrendered to the Father's plan to offer Himself as our Substitute for sin. In John 10:18 Jesus said, "No one [takes My life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative." Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Three times Jesus responds, "I am He." By evoking that name, the Lord was laying claim to His divine nature and co-equality with the Father. In essence He was saying, "I am Jehovah." The Jews in the crowd understood the implications of His use of that name for God and considered it blasphemy.

Out of concern for His disciples Jesus says, "If you seek Me, let these go their way" (John 18:8). This appears to be a reference to His substitutionary death. Jesus offers His

life for theirs (and ours). Second Corinthians 5:21 says, “He . . . who knew no sin [became] sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Peter’s impetuous nature flared. He grabbed his sword and made a clumsy attempt to defend the Lord against hundreds of career military men. Peter was a fisherman by trade and certainly not a skilled swordsman. Furiously slashing about, he managed to cut off the right ear of the high priest’s slave, Malchus, a man who had made the unfortunate decision to push to the front of the fray. We can assume Peter intended to take off his head, but only managed to slice off an ear. Luke tells us that Jesus “touched his ear and healed him” (Luke 22:51). Jesus rebuked Peter for failing to see God’s plan unfolding. Jesus would willingly drink “the cup . . . the Father had given to Him” (John 18:11). According to the accounts of Matthew and Mark “all the disciples left Him and fled” (Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50), fulfilling Jesus’ words in John 16:32.

## **II. The Religious Trials - John 18:12-14; 19-24**

The authorities led Jesus to Annas, “the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year” (John 18:13). Although Caiaphas officially held the office of high priest, most recognized Annas as the true authority in Jerusalem, especially in matters concerning the temple. In the Old Testament, a man was appointed as high priest for life. Around the year 15 AD, Annas was pressured by Rome to step aside. However, he was so powerful that out of the next seven high priests that were installed, five were his sons, one was a grandson, and the other his son-in-law. Annas was not only powerful, he was corrupt. He was in charge of temple concessions which, among other things, involved changing money and inspecting animals to be used for sacrifices. He was known to charge outrageous fees to exchange foreign currency. And he blatantly exorted money from those bringing sacrifices. The Old Testament required that every sacrifice must be without spot or blemish. His inspectors often rejected the sacrifices brought by Jewish pilgrims to festivals or holy days, forcing them to purchase one at the outer court of the temple, conveniently raised in Annas’ fields. Annas hated Jesus and saw Him as a threat to his whole operation (John 2:13-16).

First, Jesus was brought first to Annas. From the beginning, Jesus’ trial was an illegal convocation.

Jewish tradition carefully regulated the conduct of criminal trials, even more so than civil cases. No trial was to be held in secret or at night, and the only proper place to hear criminal cases was the “Hall of Judgment” in the temple.

Furthermore, when evidence was being heard, the accused could not be compelled to testify in his own case. All charges had to be substantiated by multiple corroborating witnesses. (Chuck Swindoll, *Insights on John*, p. 311).

When Jesus handily dismissed Annas, he “sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest” (John 18:24) where the mockery and miscarriage of justice continued.

“Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people” (John 18:14). Caiaphas and the Jewish leaders who were

hostile towards Jesus had been plotting His death for quite a while (John 11:47-53), but the Jews “were not permitted to put anyone to death” (John 18:31) under Roman law. While Rome allowed them a certain degree of self-government, the right to apply capital punishment was strictly held by Rome. Therefore, trumped up charges and an illegal manipulation of Roman justice by the Jewish leaders would be required to put Jesus to death.

### **III. Three Denials - John 18:15-18; 25-27**

The disciples fled when Jesus was arrested, but Peter and another disciple returned. The other disciple “entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest” (John 18:15) and helped Peter gain access, although he only made it as far as the door. As Jesus was affirming His deity to members of the Sanhedrin, Peter was in the process of denying Him. Hours earlier, Peter had declared his unswerving commitment to Christ saying, “I will lay down my life for you” (John 13:37). And it was Peter who jumped to the defense of his Lord at His arrest. He was ready to take on a contingent of trained militia with a small sword he most likely wore in his waist-band. Now, three times Peter denied Christ as he warmed himself around the fire among the enemies of Christ. “Immediately a rooster crowed,” just as Jesus has prophesied (John 13:38). Luke’s account adds, “The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, ‘Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:61-62).

Three disciples are mentioned in this passage and each represents a spiritual condition.

1. Judas - Judas was an **unbeliever** and he stood with those, some extremely religious and some out right heathens, who opposed God and His Christ (John 18:5).
2. Peter - Peter was a genuine follower of Christ, but in this account he represents **the carnal Christian** who follows Jesus at a distance, and acts in ways contrary to a faithful follower (John 18:10-11; 18:15-27).
3. The unnamed disciple - This was most likely John, and he was determined to publicly follow the Lord Jesus, regardless of the cost (John 18:15-16).

Lost. Carnal Christian. Committed Christian. Beloved, examine your own heart. Which group are you in? I urge you to surrender to Christ-for salvation or sanctification. He alone is worthy! Hallelujah! What a Savior!