

Gospel John Chapter 18 -- John Karmelich

1. Chapter 18 begins a new section of the Gospel of John -- The arrest and trials of Jesus
 - a) Of course, there are lessons for our own life in our “trials”
 - b) As well as the implications to our lives of the purpose of these trials.
 - c) Jesus knew that his arrest and crucifixion was immanent.
 - d) The last section (Chapters 13-17) is considered the last great speech to believers.
 - i) Scholars call it “The upper room discourse” simply because it takes place in an “upper room.”
 - e) And now the actual arrest is taking place.
2. John’s account of Jesus arrest is *not* intended to be a full description of the events.
 - a) One has to study all four gospels to get full details.
 - b) Remember the purpose of John’s Gospel is to focus on *who Jesus is*. (His deity as God).
 - i) The other 3 gospels tend to focus on Jesus’ *humanity*.
 - a) Jesus was God. Jesus *became* man. After the resurrection He became “100% man and 100% God”.
 - ii) For those interested in studying *all* the events of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion, the last page of this lesson has a supplement summarizing the events of the trials.
 - c) Remember that John’s Gospel was written approx. 30 years after the other 3 gospels were already in circulation.
 - i) John assumes that the reader is already aware of some of the other details.
 - ii) John’s gospel intends to “fill in the gaps” missing from the other Gospels.
 - iii) But again, the events included in this Gospel are mainly intended to focus on the *deity* of Jesus as God. They are not intended to disclaim his humanity, but simply to *emphasize* Jesus’ deity.
3. As I read and re-read this chapter I started noticing some interesting details.
 - a) The first is that Jesus really took charge of the events.
 - i) Despite the fact that others *thought* they were in charge,
 - ii) notice how Jesus *takes over control* of the situation whenever He is questioned.
 - b) Second, notice Jesus’ *protection* of His disciples.
 - i) *Nobody* but Jesus gets arrested, despite the fact that Peter attacked a guard.
 - ii) The other gospels mention the disciples scattering the scene.
 - iii) The message to us is that Jesus is our protector (The Good Shepherd).
 - c) Third, read the passage and see how Jesus handles difficult situations.
 - i) These lessons are for our trials too. At some point in everybody’s life, we go through tough trials, and some people experience unfair situations.
 - a) Sometimes we are falsely accused for other people’s personal gain.
 - b) We are going to learn how Jesus’ reacts in an unfair trial.
 - (1) And learn how we are supposed to react in the same situation.
 - (2) Jesus gives an illustration of what He meant by “turning the other cheek”, and it is not what most people think!
4. Verse 1: 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.
 - a) “Finished praying” is the prayer of John 17. The entire chapter is a prayer.
 - b) At that time in Jerusalem, there were many private gardens in this area.
 - i) Jesus was probably given access to one as his resting place in Jerusalem.
 - ii) Having a private, familiar location was helpful for the peace of the disciples.
 - a) The same way a familiar retreat location would be good for us.

- c) Verse 1 mentions “The Kidron Valley”. This is not a good literal translation. Most translations mention that it was the “brook” Kidron. The Kidron brook is one of those water streams that is dry in the summer and is most active in the winter and spring after the snow runoff.
 - i) This is significant for two reasons:
 - a) Remember this is Passover season (spring). The night before, hundreds of thousands of the lambs were slaughtered for the Passover Meal.
 - b) The Kidron brook was probably dark red from the lambs’ blood.
 - (1) This is a visual reminder of His soon sacrifice.
 - (2) The name Kidron means “dark waters”.
 - ii) A lot of the subtle references in the Gospels are to show the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy about Jesus. Jesus made the claim of the Old Testament that “the volume of the book is written of me” (John 5:39, Hebrews 10:7)
 - a) There is a type of prophecy called “parallelism”, Where the events of the Old Testament “parallel” what will happen to the Messiah.
 - b) In the Old Testament Book of 2nd Samuel, Chapter 15, we read of David being betrayed by his son Absalom.
 - (1) In David’s escape, David had to cross over this same brook.
 - (2) Ahithophel, David’s friend and counselor, betrayed him.
 - (a) Just like Judas’ betrayed Him.
5. Verse 2: Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples.
- a) Judas may have gone back to the “upper room” as mentioned in Chapters 13-14 first. That is where he last left Jesus. Judas then knew next where to look for Jesus, as this was a “familiar spot”
 - i) One commentator asked a piercing question: If someone was looking for you,, would that know *where* to look for you? Would it be with Jesus?
 - b) I mentioned in my introduction that the focus of the Gospel of John is on Jesus’ deity.
 - i) John does not record Jesus’ praying or his extreme suffering. (see Matthew 26:39 for this). Instead, John speaks of the glory.
6. Verse 3: 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.
- a) A “detachment” of soldiers was about 500-600 men, by most estimates.
 - i) The religious leaders and the solders wanted to be prepared for a battle.
 - a) After Palm Sunday, many were hoping Jesus was the reigning Messiah.
 - b) Therefore, they were afraid of an army of followers.
 - c) They also knew Jesus was capable of miracles
 - (1) so they wanted a large army in case Jesus used his “powers”..
 - d) Imagine the arrogance of thinking one can “contain” the God of the universe with 500 men!
 - ii) The “officials of the chief priests” were the temple police.. These were a small group under the orders of the religious leaders to enforce Jewish customs.
 - iii) The torches and the lanterns were needed, as the arrest took place at night and would require a search in the darkness of the olive grove.

7. Verse 4: Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"
- a) One of the key phrases of the Gospel of John is the opening of this verse:
 - i) Jesus "knowing all that was going to happen to him".
 - b) Jesus just made this raiding party look ridiculous.
 - i) The army brought search lights to find Jesus. It was a waste of time because Jesus went out to meet them!
 - a) Why? Jesus "knowing (knew) all that was going to happen to him"
 - ii) Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss (Matthew 26:48, et.al.) in order to identify him to the Roman soldiers (Romans didn't know what Jesus looked like).
 - a) This was not necessary. Jesus identified himself.
 - b) Why? Jesus "knowing (knew) all that was going to happen to him"
 - iii) The army bringing their weapons were a waste of time.
 - a) Why? Jesus "knowing all that was going to happen to him".
 - iv) Remember all this when you see people trying to stop God's game-plan!
8. Verse 4b-6: "Who is it you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.)⁶ When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.
- a) When Jesus said "I am he", the literal translation is "I am". As in "I am" the Good Shepherd, I am the Way the Truth and the Life, I am the Door, etc.
 - i) This is a claim of deity equal with God.
 - b) There are generally 2 views about "drew back and fell to the ground".
 - i) The first represents God showing his power. The sheer force of the words "I AM" caused the soldiers to fall back.
 - ii) The second view is the more practical. The soldiers had probably heard about Jesus' performing miracles and were cautious. They were probably afraid of an armed rebellion or an ambush. Now here is the one they feared right in front of them declaring "I am". They got nervous and fell back.
 - iii) Which ever case is correct (and both may be), the power of Jesus is stated.
 - c) Notice they called Jesus: "Jesus of Nazareth"
 - i) They called him Jesus of Nazareth because they did not want to give Jesus the dignity of being called the Christ.
 - a) When witnessing to people, sometimes it is helpful to understand their pre-conceptions of Jesus before you go further.
 - d) Notice at this point, Jesus could have walked away. Jesus was here to fulfill a destiny for the sake of the disciples and us. Verse 7 also shows this point.
9. Verse 7: Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."
- a) He was not "arrested" at all. He willingly gives himself up to protect his disciples and carry out his mission.
10. Verse 8: "I told you that I am he, (*literally "I am"*)" Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go."⁹ This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."
- a) Notice Jesus taking control. Jesus gave the order to let the other disciples go.
 - i) Jesus sacrificed himself for their safety.
 - ii) Although the disciples probably felt guilty for abandoning Jesus, they did not realize it was all part of God's game plan.
 - iii) Isn't it interesting how even our *failures* are used for God's glory!
 - b) Here's a question. Could the soldiers have arrested the others *even if they wanted to?*
 - i) It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" (Romans 14:11 NIV)

11. Verse 10: 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.)
- a) Why wasn't Peter arrested?. Luke tells us that Jesus' healed the man's ear (Luke 22:51).
 - i) You can't deny the miracle, or else we would be reading about another cross at the crucifixion!
 - b) The soldier's name (Malchus) is mentioned probably as later in this chapter to tie to the fact that one of his relatives accused Peter of being one of his disciples.
 - i) I've always wondered if Malchus became a believer after he had his ear healed.
 - a) As Jesus said many times "He who has an ear, let him hear".
 - b) Imagine what a witness Jesus must have been to him. Malchus came to *arrest* Jesus. Jesus cured his cut-off ear!
 - c) Peter had his bravery, but it was misplaced. Peter was focusing on Peter's will, not God's will. It is also interesting to see how brash Peter was in the *presence* of Jesus, but how scared he was when Jesus was not close to Him!
 - i) The other gospels mention that when Jesus asked his disciples to pray with them, they fell asleep. The combination of 1) not seeking God's will and 2) taking matters into your own hands is always a mistake. Ask Peter!
 - ii) "It is exceedingly thoughtless in Peter to try to prove his faith by the sword, while he could not do so by his tongue." (Calvin)
 - iii) The application to us is how many of us have ever come out "swinging a sword for Jesus" when that is *never* what he intended for us?
 - a) This is especially true in our witnesses for Jesus. Many times we come off too brash and end up turning people away from Jesus.
 - b) This reminded me of something (Jewish) radio talk show host Dennis Praeger once said. "I don't mind Christians telling me about Jesus. I just have a problem when they are obnoxious about it."
12. Verse 11: Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"
- a) Jesus is rebuking the disciples. Notice the only negative words in this arrest were not to the soldiers or to Judas, but to Peter. God disciplines those who he loves.
 - b) This verse mentions the word "cup".
 - i) The "cup" is a reference to the upcoming events of the crucifixion.
 - a) It is not a literal cup. It is like us saying "Shall I not complete the task my Father has given me?"
 - ii) The word "cup" connects this statement with a prayer which only the other 3 gospels record (Matt 26:42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42). Though John must have known of Jesus' struggle, he recorded only the outcome.
 - a) Again, the *focus* of this Gospel is on Jesus' *deity*, not His humanity.
 - b) Jesus accepted the Father's will and calmly moved on to its fulfillment.

13. Verse 12: Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him ¹³ and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. ¹⁴ Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people.
- a) By studying the text and some historical writings of that time, it helps to understand the role of the High Priest.
 - i) The Old Testament called for the High Priest was appointed for life.
 - a) During this time, the High Priest was changed every now and then.
 - b) Annas was the “ring-leader”. According to the historian Josephus, Annas was the power behind the throne. Although Annas himself was high priest for 18 years, His four sons, one grandson and one son-in-law (Caiaphas) were high priests during different years. Annas was the leader behind the throne. That’s why Jesus was brought here first.
 - ii) Verse 14 states that Caiaphas had already found Jesus’ guilty (“it would be good if one man died for the people”). Therefore, all the trials before the religious leaders had pre-ordained outcomes.
 - a) It’s like the old joke:
 - (1) “You will be given a fair trial, and then you will be shot”.
 - b) It’s important to point out an injustice that has been committed through out the centuries because of verses like this. There has been a lot of anti-Jewish hatred and crimes performed because the Jews were blamed as the “Christ-killers”. Nobody killed Jesus. Jesus *freely* gave up His life (for ours).
 - i) “If you want to blame somebody for the death of Jesus, blame me” (Chuck Smith)
14. Now we jump to a different scene. Verse 15: 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, ¹⁶ 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.
- a) *Most* (I emphasize most) commentators believe “the disciple known to the high priest” in Verse 15 was John. This is one of those things scholars love to debate about where I don’t see any value in knowing this information!.
 - b) Notice that the “other disciple” was not arrested (nor was Peter for that matter).
 - c) This is another focus on how Jesus’ protects his disciples.
 - d) It is also proof that this whole trial was about arresting Jesus, not his followers.
15. Verse 17: "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, "I am not."
- a) Peter could swing a sword at a guard, but he couldn’t handle a little girl!
 - b) It is amazing what we are capable of when we are away from Jesus’ presence.
 - c) As a Christian, beware of your “strengths”. A lot of times people say, “Lord, I need help in this, this, and this area of my life, but in *this area*, I’m OK.” God wants you *fully* dependant upon Him. Peter’s strong spot was his *boldness*. Yet, look where he failed!

16. Verse 18: It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.
- a) Not only is Peter following Jesus *from afar*, he is now warming himself in the fire of the enemy!
 - i) This reminds me of the opening verse of Psalm 1. This verse shows the *progression* of not following God:
 - ii) Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. (Psalm 1:1 NIV)
 - a) This verse teaches that once you start down the wrong path, the results get worse and worse. In sin, you start to “walk” in a sin, next you are “standing” in it, and finally you are “sitting” in it!
 - iii) “When you feel bad, do you go to the fires of the world to get warm? If you go to the fires of the world when you are confused, or hurting or lonely, you are going to get burned” (Jon Curson)
17. Now we switch back to Jesus’ first trial in front of Annas: Verse 19: “Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.”
- a) Notice they were calling Annas “the high priest” when Caiaphas was technically the high priest. Caiaphas was not even present at this trial.
 - b) Jewish law never required anyone to testify against themselves. This is like the 5th amendment to our constitution. It states that no person is *required* to give testimony to incriminate themselves.
18. Here is Jesus’ response: “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. ²¹ Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.”
- a) Jesus did not give in to their demands.
 - b) Once again, Jesus takes control of the situation.
 - c) He calls attention to the fact that what they are doing is illegal
 - i) Jesus knows he is not required to give testimony of Himself (as if they would believe it anyway). So he states “Go ask those who listen to me!
 - d) Jesus says to Go ask those who listen to me!” That is *our* job. Be a witness!
19. Verse 22: When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. “Is this the way you answer the high priest?” he demanded. ²³: “If I said something wrong,” Jesus replied, “testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?” ²⁴ Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest.
- a) When Jesus was struck on the cheek, the first thing that came to mind was what Jesus said about “turning the other cheek”:
 - i) “If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also.”
 - a) (Luke 6:29a NIV)
 - ii) Here is Jesus in *that exact* situation. Jesus shows here how to *apply it*.
 - iii) “He did not *literally* turn the other cheek, but *figuratively* He did.”
 - iv) “He simply repeated his previous statement that had brought on the unwarranted slap on the cheek.”
 - v) “What he had said, in effect, was, “This is not right. The law does not allow you to question me. Besides, it is not necessary.”
 - vi) “Jesus simply repeats the position he had taken earlier and stands his ground, without retaliation or personal abuse. That is what it means to turn the other cheek: Stand on your rights but without becoming angry or striking back. What a beautiful model this is. (iii, iv, v & vi., quotes from Ray Steadman)

20. Meanwhile back to “Peter & the denials”: Verse 25: As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" ²⁶ 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?" ²⁷ Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.
- a) “Because he was a child of God, and it broke his heart to know what he (Peter) had done. A child of God may get far from God, but God is never far from him. You may be dead to God, but God is never dead to you.” J. Vernon McGee
 - b) The story of Peter’s denial is written in all 4 gospels. Why the emphasis?
 - i) I *believe* it is to show that as long as we *abide* in God, we can never lose our salvation *even if* we temporary fail.
 - ii) Peter denied that he was Jesus’ disciple. Three times. Did Peter *ever* lose his salvation because of his statements? No!
 - iii) If we are faithless, He (Jesus) remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself. (2 Tim 2:13 NKJV)
21. Next we move on to the first trial in front of Pontius Pilate. Verse 28: 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.
- a) The Gospel of John does skip a lot of details about the 2nd trial in front of Caiaphas. Remember that the purpose of John’s gospel is not go give a full account of Jesus’ life, but to focus on some examples that show the deity of Jesus.
 - b) John points out the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders. They wouldn’t defile themselves by stepping on Gentile “territory”, but they were willing to falsely give up a man for murder.
 - i) One can give many examples here of modern religious hypocrisy. The first thing that comes to mind is Jesus’ statement of "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? (Matthew 7:3 NIV)
22. Verse 29: So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"
- a) If Pilate was a typical Roman, he usually held court for daily business early in the morning, hoping to be done before mid-day.
 - b) Historians state there was no love lost between Pilate and the Jewish leaders. Pilate took money from the temple treasury to build an aqueduct. Pilate was in danger of being removed from his post based on the complaints about him to Rome from the religious leaders. Pilate knew this.
 - i) He was described as "naturally inflexible and ruthless in his conceit" and he was charged with corruption, violence and extortion” (Josephus)
 - c) The account of Jesus trail before Pilate is the longest in the four gospels. Where as the other 3 gospels deal largely with the legal charges, John’s concern with Pilate and on Pilate’s shifting attitude.
 - i) Pilate was a “bureaucrat” in the true sense of the word. Like any good bureaucrat, your job is to get out of the situation without taking any blame.
 - ii) Pilate was in danger of losing his job. (The Roman Empire has some compassion. As long as you did not rebel against Rome, they tried to be “fair” to their people. Governors who were too cruel lost their jobs.)
 - iii) The story of Pilate in John 18 and 19 are there to show us that we can’t be “neutral” about Jesus. We have to make a decision one way or the other.
23. Verse 30: If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you."
- a) The Jewish leaders could not give a straight answer. They knew the charges were false.

24. Verse 31: Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." "But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews objected.
- a) Pilate's first method of trying to get out of the situation was by trying to tell the Jewish leaders to deal with this issue themselves.
 - b) The Jewish leaders' admission that they could not execute the prisoner was a confession of their intention.
 - c) At least 3 years earlier, the Romans decided to take away capital punishment away from the Jews. "We have no right to execute anyone" the Jews objected" (Verse 31)
 - i) There is a prophecy in Genesis that is interpreted as the Messiah will come *prior* to the power of the death penalty being taken away from the Jews (Genesis 49:10). The Jews never lost this power until the Romans. An interesting side note is that the official Jewish commentary (The Talmud) mentions that some Jews paraded in the streets that God had failed to keep this promise. Little did they know that God *kept* this promise and that the Messiah was among them!
 - ii) In the Jews own zeal, they attempted several times to stone Jesus to death. This was a violation of Roman law.
 - iii) Some commentators speculated that the Jewish leaders *wanted* crucifixion as a form of punishment because the following verse:
 - a) "Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse." (Deuteronomy 21:23a, NIV)
 - b) The Jewish leaders may have thought by hanging Jesus on a tree, Jesus could not fulfill the role of the Messiah because by Deut. 21:23, Jesus would be "cursed"
 - (1) The Jewish leaders did not understand the "role" of the Messiah. Jesus "became" sin.
 - (2) God made him who had no sin (Jesus) to *be* sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV *emphasis added*).
25. Verse 32: This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled.
- a) Jesus himself predicted himself that he would be "lifted up", a reference to be sacrificed on the cross. (References: John 3:14, John 8:28, John 12:34).
 - b) A guest speaker at our church (Dr. Bob Gundry) gave a great comment about this.
 - i) To "stone" someone to death is to knock them down.
 - ii) In contrast, Jesus described the crucifixion as being "lifted up".
 - a) He was "lifted up" for our sakes (Isaiah 53:5)
26. Verse 33: Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"
- a) Remember that Pilate had to come out of the palace because the Jewish leaders would not defile themselves. Now Pilate was going back inside and summoning Jesus. Jesus has been bound this whole time.
 - b) Pilate could have simply pronounced Jesus guilty of the religious leaders charges. Instead, he takes Jesus back to examine Him himself. At this point Pilate was just trying to figure this guy out.
 - c) The emphasis of Pilate's question is on the word "you". "Are *you* King of the Jews?"
 - i) If Jesus said "no", Pilate would have imagined that he was not a king at all.
 - a) If Jesus said "no", he would be denying the truth about Himself.
 - ii) If Jesus said "yes", it would mean that he was a king according to Jewish standards and that he was a threat to Caesar.
 - a) Notice therefore, how Jesus reacted (next verse).

27. Verse 34: "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"
- a) Jesus turns around and puts Pilate on trial.
 - b) Jesus had appealed to the head of this man, Pilate.
 - i) Jesus asked Pilate the logical question of where he got his evidence.
28. Verse 35: "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?"
- a) Jesus answer irritated Pilate. He was accustomed to receiving answers, not challenges.
 - b) Literally "Am I a Jew?" am I conveys the feeling the Pilate did not want to be classified as Jew. (You get the feeling Pilate hated his job and his position here.)
 - c) "Pilate would be happy if Jesus would simply say He is not a king and that would get Pilate off the hook. Who is on trial? Pilate or Jesus?" J. Vernon McGee
29. Verse 36: 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." ³⁷ "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."
- a) This reinforces Jesus' statement in this Gospel that Jesus was fully aware of both his origin and destiny.
 - i) Jesus must have meant that he had existed in a preincarnate state.
 - ii) Instead of advertising his deity, Jesus simply took it for granted.
 - iii) "HAD Jesus been a king in that sense (as the world thinks of a king), there would have been a real battle when the solders and the palace guards came to arrest him in the garden. The fact that he was taken so easily shows that his was different sort of kingship" (F.F. BRUCE).
 - b) Pilate did understand that Jesus was claiming to be a king.
 - i) At this point Pilate probably figured he was some sort of crazy person.
 - a) It would be like us meeting someone claiming to be Napoleon.
 - c) Jesus claims in Verse 37 that he came into this world to testify of "the truth". Jesus claims that He *is* the truth (John 14:6)
 - d) Verse 37 goes on to say that "Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."
 - i) This is a shocking claim that the only truth (about God) is through Jesus!
 - ii) Therefore, one must believe that Jesus is either God or a mad-man.
 - a) There is no middle ground, (as Pilate will attempt to take).
30. Verse 38: 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".
- a) Notice Pilate did not even stick around to hear Jesus answer the question!
 - b) For Pilate, soldiers and armies were truth; Rome was truth; Caesar was truth; political power was truth.
 - i) Jesus' words were lost on Pilate, but John hoped his listeners would get it.
 - a) Get what? That Jesus' words *are* the truth.
 - ii) Jesus was trying to appeal to Pilate to *see* the truth about Jesus.
 - a) Jesus never takes away Pilate's free-will about making his own choice.
 - b) Here we see "free-will" and "pre-destiny" played out together, like it is in our lives.

- c) In Roman law, you could convict someone on a plea of guilty without confirmation from witnesses. But it was evident to Pilate that Jesus' response to his question was not tantamount to a "yes" answer. A "yes" answer to "Are you King of the Jews?" is a threat to Caesar. Jesus was no threat to Caesar.
 - i) One of the great misunderstandings about Christianity is that it is a threat to one's political way of life. Jesus' mission was never to overthrow political governments (See Mark 12:17), Jesus came to teach us the *way to salvation* in spite of our present circumstances.
31. Verse 39: 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?"
- a) There is little non-Biblical evidence to support the tradition of releasing a prisoner by Rome during Passover. It may have been a short-lived tradition.
 - i) Most commentators suspect Rome allowed this because they were afraid of a rebellion. Rome's #1 fear was any group uprising against the empire. Here were millions of Jews gathered in Jerusalem. Releasing a prisoner may have been a tradition to "calm the crowd".
 - b) Pilate can not refrain from annoying the Jewish leaders by calling Jesus "the king of the Jews". Pilate at this point probably thought Jesus was just a "harmless kook". Pilate also knew Jesus was setup by the religious leaders.
 - c) Even though Pilate *knew* Jesus was setup, Pilate was *more afraid* of losing his own job and didn't release Jesus.
 - i) Jesus said: "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 10:39 NIV)
32. Verse 40: They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.
- a) The crowd wanted Barabbas because he was the type of revolutionary they wanted. Someone who would overthrow Rome.
 - i) Jesus came to teach that peace and salvation does not come by political power, but by following him. Letting go of your life and putting your trust in God.
 - b) There is a great illustration called "The Gospel of Barabbas".
 - i) Barabbas was guilty of a crime.
 - a) The crime of rebellion against authority.
 - ii) Barabbas was found guilty and convicted.
 - a) The law required Barabbas to pay the full price of the crime
 - b) The penalty was crucifixion.
 - iii) Barabbas was set free as *Jesus paid the price for his crime!*
 - c) That's the Gospel that we preach! We are guilty of rebelling against God's authority. We have been found guilty of this crime. Because God loved us, He paid the price *for* us and set us free!
33. Let's Pray: Heavenly Father, we thank you for these lessons you have taught us. Help us to rest in your power. Help us to learn that like the disciples, you are there to protect us. Just as you're enemies who tried to put *you* on trial, were put on trial themselves. Help us to live with that sense of peace, that you are working all things out for your glory. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Appendix to the Lesson:

SIX STAGES OF JESUS' TRIAL

The trial lasted less than 18 hours.. Jesus was taken to six different hearings.

(Source of this table: Life Application Bible)

Hearings before Jewish Authorities:	Preliminary Hearing before Annas (John 18:12-24)	Because the office of the High Priest was for life, Annas was still the “official” High Priest in the eyes of the Jews, even though the Romans had appointed another. Thus Annas still carried much weight among the Jewish Supreme Court.
	Hearing before Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57-68)	Like the hearing before Annas, this hearing was conducted at night in secrecy. It was the full of illegalities that made a mockery of justice.
	Trial before the Jewish Supreme Court (Matthew 27 1-2)	Just after daybreak, 70 members of the Jewish Supreme Court met to rubber-stamp their approval of the previous hearings to make them appear legal. The purpose of this trial was not to determine justice, but to justify their own preconceptions of Jesus’ guilt.
Hearings before Roman Authorities:	First Hearing before Pilate (Luke 23:1-5)	The religious leaders had condemned Jesus to death on religious grounds, but only the Roman government could grant the death penalty. Thus they took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor, and accused him of treason and rebellion, crimes for which the Roman government gave the death penalty. Pilate saw at once that Jesus was innocent, but he was afraid about the uproar being caused by the religious leaders.
	Hearing before Herod (Luke 23:6-12)	Since Jesus’ home was in the region of Galilee, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Agrippa, the ruler of Galilee, who was in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. Herod was eager to see Jesus do a miracle., but when Jesus remained silent, Herod wanted nothing to do with him and sent him back to Pilate.
	Last Hearing before Pilate (Luke 23:13-25)	Pilate didn’t like the religious leaders. He wasn’t interested in condemning Jesus because he knew Jesus was innocent. However, he knew that another uprising in his district might cost him his job. First he tried to compromise with the religious leaders by having Jesus beaten, an illegal action in itself. But finally he gave in and handed Jesus over to be executed. His self-interest was stronger than his sense of justice.