

That You May Continue to Believe...



AN Exposition of the gospel of John

Jesus Betrayed and Arrested John 18:1-19:16

^{NIV} **John 18:1**...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.

I suspect the moment Jesus finished praying He got up from where He was reclining and began to move down the steps to the street below. The disciples may have been surprised at His speed and probably had to scramble to get their things together and follow behind. Once outside, the cool air of the April night would have snapped them awake. The full moon would have been shining above and the street would have been filled with festive men and women moving toward the Temple. No doubt the disciples had to pick up their pace as Jesus moved quickly down the street toward the Temple. At the end of the street, they would have turned down to cross along side the Temple wall and over the rugged Kidron Valley¹.

As they made their way down the slope of the valley, the Temple wall would have loomed up on their left. Below them, the small creek bed at the bottom of the ravine, normally dry, would have glistened dark red in the moonlight. They would have known why. They would have known that the blood of thousands of Passover lambs poured out on the altar and the water used to cleanse both the carcasses and the priests ran out through drains in the Temple floor into the valley and out the Kidron². They also would have known that that blood, which would be scooped up later after it dried and sold as fertilizer, was the price of sin. Still, they were careful where they stepped.

Once they crossed over the Kidron and started up the slope of the Mount of Olives, they would have been able to look back to their left and look almost directly into the front facade of Holy Place. They would have been able to see the rich embroidered surface of the outer curtain and they would have been able to see in the light of the moon and in the light of the hundreds of torches in the courtyard, the huge golden vines that ornamented the face of the Temple. They would have also been able to see the huge clusters of golden grapes that hung from the golden vines³. They would have seen them hundreds of times before going into the temple. But from where they were on Olivet looking across the Kidron, I suspect, in the moonlight they looked like real grapes on a garden wall. Perhaps they thought of Jesus' words concerning the True Vine.

A few steps further and they would have entered a familiar enclosure. It was a small grove; really it was an olive press called Gethsemane.⁴ In season, it would have been a busy place but that night it would have been deserted. No doubt some of the disciples would have stretched out to sleep as Jesus separated Himself to pray.

John writes:

^{NIV} **John 18:2...** Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. 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.

From there in His vantage point, Jesus would have been able to see the huge array of men coming out from the northern side of the Temple near the Roman Fortress Antonio. They group have been hard to miss. Of course verse 4, which we will read in a moment, makes it clear that Jesus already knew that they were coming.

The word that is used here in John to describe the approaching force is a technical word and meaning a cohort of soldiers, specifically Roman soldiers. Officially, a Roman cohort contained seven hundred and sixty foot soldiers and two hundred and forty cavalymen⁵. In actual practice, however, it usually contained only around six hundred foot soldiers. Sometimes, the word used here referred to a smaller group, a maniple, which would have only contained about two hundred foot soldiers⁶. Regardless of which of these groups are referred to here, it was a huge group of soldiers. Besides soldiers stationed in Palestine were

accustomed to dealing with both riots and revolts and were considered some of the best trained and most irritable Roman troops in the world.

Beyond that the text is filled with irony. They were coming in the strength of a cohort with torches and lanterns looking the light of the world. They were coming with swords and clubs and cudgels looking for the Prince of Peace⁷. They were coming led by a traitor to arrest the most loyal covenant keeper that ever lived. At any rate, they did not surprise Jesus. Instead, Jesus surprised them walking straight up to them and initiating the dialogue. Look at verse 4.

^{NIV} **John 18:4...** Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "**Who is it you want?**" ⁵ "**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. ⁷ Again he asked them, "**Who is it you want?**" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ "**I told you that I am he,**" 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.**"

Now there are several remarkable things here in this passage. First, Jesus knew what was about to happen to Him. In spite of that, He did not cower. Instead, He went out and met the soldiers and the Temple representative and guards face to face. He spoke to the soldiers using the divine name, ἐγώ εἰμι. When He did that these grizzled, field proven Roman soldiers drew back and fell to the ground before His revelation of glory and power⁸. Now, here is the point John was making. As far as John was concerned, Jesus was the one in charge of the whole event⁹. He confronted the soldiers. His divine power knocked them backward¹⁰. He told them whom they could arrest and He told them whom they were to let go. Of course, none of His actions were isolated acts of heroism; what Jesus did was, as always, a fulfillment of the Father's will and of the Word of God. In this particular case, His own word is fulfilled and equated with the authority of the Old Testament¹¹. He had said, "**I have not lost one of those you gave me.**" This scene makes it clear that He meant what He said. But even beyond that, John is making the point here that Jesus was sovereign even in the appalling blackness of the betrayal and arrest. That is one of the reasons, I think, that John omitted Judas' kiss. John was not denying Judas' culpability in the betrayal. He pointed out that Judas was there. But what John wanted to make clear was that Judas was not the one in control of the scene. On the other hand, neither was Simon Peter. Look at verse 10.

^{NIV} **John 18:10...** 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.) ¹¹ Jesus commanded Peter, "**Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?**" 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.

Now, you ought to notice right off something that is missing in comparison to Luke's account. The thing that is missing here is Jesus' healing of the man's ear.

^{NIV} **Luke 22:51...**But Jesus answered, "**No more of this!**" And he touched the man's ear and healed him.

Now I have heard some teachers say Luke, a doctor, was interested in medical things hence the record of the healing. But I think the reason that the healing is not mentioned here is that John does not want the healing to be misconstrued as a "**sign**". Jesus has made it plain that Jesus has shown unbelievers all the signs they are to get

^{NIV} **John 12:37...**Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.

Now the next thing you ought to notice is that text says that the soldiers bound and escorted Jesus to Annas the father in law of Caiaphas. Let me take a moment and talk about Annas because he is not mentioned in the other gospels, at least in connection with the trial of Jesus. That fact has caused some commentators to question John's account. I do not. I think it makes perfect sense. You see Annas was the grand master of the Sadducean party. He had been High Priest himself for nine years, from AD 6 to AD 15. And even after he had lost his office he still managed to determine who succeeded him. He managed to put into office four of his sons, his son in law Caiaphas and even one of his grandsons. So you can see, I think, how Caiaphas and others might have deferred to Annas in times of crisis construing him, more or less, as the High Priest Emeritus. Some have argued, and I think perhaps rightly, that Annas was the real High Priest and that all the others were simply puppets at his disposal.¹²

Anyway, Jesus was bound and taken to Annas for a late night, illegal interrogation. Verse 15 is going to tell us that Peter and another disciple followed

along behind the soldiers. In the story, this other disciple is not mentioned by name. There is every reason, of course, to believe that this other disciple is John the Beloved. Whoever he was, Annas knew him and somehow that gained him access to the proceedings. Let's look and see how John says it in verse 15.

^{NIV} **John 18:15**... 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. ¹⁷ **"You are not one of his disciples, are you?"** the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, **"I am not."** 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.

Peter's mind must have been whirling. There had been so many troops and he had been enormously brave. He had rushed into the fray only to be rebuked for his action by Jesus. Standing there, around the fire, in the courtyard of Annas must have made him feel all that much more out of place. The High Priest's house was the social, political and cultural center of Jerusalem and his unrefined Galilean drawl would have made him stick out like the bumpkin he was, especially among so many Judeans. The house was too elegant and the people were too refined. He must have felt immensely uncomfortable amidst the splendor and pomp. Now that he had had time to think, he must have felt particularly small. Peter probably didn't even think of his response to the maid at the gate as a denial. It was likely an issue of pragmatism; surely, there was no need to call attention to himself right off.

Inside the High Priest's house, however, there was no such opportunity for pragmatism. Annas was questioning Jesus about His disciples and His teaching and Jesus was refusing to dignify him with an answer. Look how John describes it in verse 19.

^{NIV} **John 18:19**... Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ²⁰ **"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."** 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.

Now I have said this already, but one of the interesting things about John's account is that he is the only gospel writer to mention Annas in regard to the trial of Jesus. There are a number of possible reasons for that. Originally, the High Priest was appointed for life. Perhaps, John still viewed Annas as the "real High Priest" even though his son-in-law Caiaphas officially held the title¹³. Perhaps, John wanted to show how Annas gathered his evidence privately to be able to sway the other Sanhedrin members into voting his way. Whatever the reason, it is particularly important, I think, that John does not include the interview around which Matthew built his account of the trial of Jesus. In Matthew everything culminates in Caiaphas' asking of one particular question¹⁴. In Matthew, the interrogation of Jesus builds until Caiaphas says:

^{NIV} Matthew 26:63...But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

In Matthew, Caiaphas had grown frustrated and angry at Jesus' refusal to answer his questions. In an act of desperation He calls upon Jesus to answer his question under the charge of an oath before God. In John, of course, there is no reason to ask that question at all. It had already been answered time and time again. John the Baptist had already answered it in chapter one.

^{NIV} John 1:34... "I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."

Nathanael had also answered it in chapter one.

^{NIV} John 1:49...Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

And Martha had answered it in chapter eleven.

^{NIV} John 11:27 "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

And it had been answered by the countless words and acts of Jesus themselves.

Still, it seems obvious John never intended to include every single piece of data concerning Jesus. And it seems equally obvious that the data he does use is chosen to make his point. For example, in verses 25-27, John tells us that Peter is asked two questions immediately after Jesus had asked two questions of His interrogators.

^{NIV} **John 18:25...** 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.**" 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.

Do you see the point? Jesus asked two questions and is struck for perceived insolence while Peter denies Jesus and is granted warmth and acceptance by his Jewish interrogators. Listen to how Raymond Brown puts it.

...John makes unique theological use of the scene of Peter's denials. By making Peter's denials simultaneous with Jesus' defense before Annas, John has constructed a dramatic contrast wherein Jesus stands up to his questioners and denies nothing, while Peter cowers before his questioners and denies everything. Peter's coming after Jesus to the high priest's palace *then is not* a contradiction of Jesus' prediction (xvi 32) that the disciples would leave him all alone. Jesus was never more alone, humanly speaking, than when Peter said three times that he' was not Jesus' disciple.¹⁵

Now, if I could I would put it like this I would say, "**John chose and shaped his material because he was trying to get the reader to be faithful like Jesus and not to be a person like Peter who denied Jesus to save his own neck.**" You will remember that I have been making the point for some 21 weeks now that John constructed his gospel to get those first century Jewish fence straddlers to come off the fence and to continue to believe in Jesus. In John's Gospel, the brave and the noble are those who hang in there, who endure in conflict for the sake of Jesus. Of course, John's ultimate expression of bravery and dignity is Jesus Himself.

Now I am making that point because John includes Peter's denial but does not seem to care one wit about Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin. Notice in verse 28 how much room is given to the official trial of before Caiaphas.

^{NIV} **John 18:28**... 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.

Do you see how John deals with it? He just passes it by. Matthew and Mark took fourteen verses each to describe the trial before Caiaphas. Luke took eleven verses to do the same. John does not even include it; instead, he focuses on the ironic sense of urgency that the Jews felt to keep themselves ceremonially clean. Now imagine that. They don't want to go into the Praetorium because they are afraid that it will make them ritually unclean¹⁶. There are in the midst of a politically motivated lynching of the sinless Son of God and they are afraid of being made unclean.

Now, I want to explain the background here as briefly as I can. The "**palace**" as it is called here in the NIV was the Praetorium. The Praetorium was the place where the Roman leader resided. Of course, the Roman Procurator had a permanent residence in Caesarea. But officially the Praetorium was wherever he was. If the Romans had been in the field, the Praetorium would have been a tent. But in a settled city like Jerusalem, the Romans usually took over one of city's palaces. Here it probably means either Herod's magnificent palace or the Fortress Antonio, which happened to be right next door to the Temple. I personally prefer the idea of it having been Herod's Palace because of the irony. If the Jews had rightly honored Jesus as king, His rightful place of abode would have been Herod's palace. But, here's the thing, the Jews did not want to go inside the Praetorium because they were afraid of defilement. It may have been because they were fearful of leaven or yeast. Passover was the feast of unleavened bread. Or it may have been because the Jews viewed all Gentile women as unclean and as a result viewed the men they lived with as unclean as well¹⁷. Or it may have been because the Gentiles in those days were notorious for burying their dead, especially aborted babies, in their homes or for flushing them down their drains¹⁸. If that were the case, the building would have been defiled and would have caused anyone who entered it to incur a seven-day defilement, That would have meant, of course, that the defiled person would have had to wait another month to eat the Passover. Whatever the reason, Pilate had to get up and go out to the Jews to accommodate their scruples. That explains, perhaps, some of the tension in their conversation.

^{NIV} **John 18:29**... So Pilate came out to them and asked, "**What charges are you bringing against this man?**" ³⁰ "If he were not a criminal," they replied, "**we would not have handed him over to you.**" ³¹ Pilate said, "**Take him yourselves**

and judge him by your own law." "But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews objected. ³² This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled.

Now, the main thing you ought to notice is that Pilate gave them permission to judge Jesus according to their own law. But their response is that they do not have the right to invoke the death penalty which either means they cannot kill Him or they cannot kill Him the way they want to kill Him. The Jews executed by stoning. The Romans obviously used crucifixion. The prophetic word of Jesus has already indicated what was going to happen.¹⁹

At any rate, their hatred of Jesus stirred Pilate to go back into the Praetorium and question Jesus further.

^{NIV} **John 18:33**...Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, **"Are you the king of the Jews?"** ³⁴ **"Is that your own idea,"** Jesus asked, **"or did others talk to you about me?"** 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?"**

This particular question ("Am I a Jew?") is particularly relevant to the whole story of Pilate and Jesus. Now the reason I say that is because Pilate had already displayed in his tenure of six or seven years an extraordinary ability to agitate the Jews. He had been born and raised on the frontier in Spain. He was of the equestrian rank not the senatorial rank, which means in all likelihood, that either his father or grandfather had been a slave. Still, Pilate had managed to come up through the ranks the hard way. I suspect, that means he was a brutal, violent man. Pilate did manage to marry over his head, sort of. He married the daughter of Julia, who was the daughter of Augustus Caesar. Now I bring that up because Julia was so debauched that her own father, Caesar Augustus, banished her from his presence. I can only imagine what Herod's wife had become used to. So Herod married into an ignoble family of nobility.²⁰

Anyway, he got into trouble with the Jews right off for displaying some ensigns, probably flags, in Jerusalem. He sent some troops down from Caesarea at night and hung the ensigns in public view in Jerusalem. The next day the Jews woke up to see flags bearing the images of several pagan deities flying in the city of YHWH. The Jews broke into a full-fledged riot. Eventually, Pilate brought in his soldiers to subdue them and the people of Jerusalem simply bared their necks and said, **"If you are going to kill us, kill us. We would rather die than have**

these images remain." Pilate, seeing their resolve, relented and removed the ensigns.

Another time, Pilate raided the temple treasury to help pay for an aqueduct that brought water into the city. The people rebelled but Pilate refused to listen and eventually wound up putting down their protest by having his men dress in disguises and intersperse throughout the mob and then at a preset signal pull out clubs and swords and attack. The crowd was dispersed and dozens were slaughtered.

Another time, Pilate hung some small votive shields in Herod's Palace that had the names of foreign gods on them. Four of Herod's sons, remembering Herod's last vicious attack, decided to write a letter to Tiberius explaining what Pilate had done. Tiberius wrote Pilate a blistering rebuke and, to Pilate's great dismay, ordered him to remove the shields to Caesarea.²¹

Then finally, Pilate had gotten into trouble just by his association with a man named Aelius Sejanus. Sejanus had been the second most important man after Tiberius and had been designated *Caesaris Amicus*, or "friend of Caesar".²² He was a rabid anti-Semite and Pilate not only adopted Sejanus' ambition but also his hatred of the Jews. Anyway, eventually it was discovered that Sejanus had been plotting to overthrow Tiberius and take the title of Caesar to himself. His plot was discovered, however, both he and his entire family were executed. Naturally everyone associated with Sejanus came under Tiberius' immediate scrutiny and that certainly included Pilate. In fact, I want you to especially remember that when the phrase "no friend of Caesar" comes up in 19:12.²³

Anyway, Pilate was right about one thing; He was certainly no Jew. Jesus does not, however, seek to explain why the Jews hate Him so. Instead, He tells Pilate that His kingdom is not in conflict with Rome, at least not in terms of real estate. Look how He says that in verse 36.

^{NIV} John 18:36...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." 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. 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?'" ⁴⁰ They shouted back, "**No, not him! Give us Barabbas!**" Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.

Pilate was a deeply cynical man. I can understand how the particular post he had drawn would have engendered that kind of emotion. But it also seems to me that in spite of his cynicism Jesus impressed Pilate. That does not mean that Pilate was righteous or anything like that. But it is clear that Pilate was willing to make at least a feeble attempt to set Jesus free. Now, it may have been a pragmatic desire to appease the Jews; or it may have been a pragmatic desire to irk the Jews. But in the end, Pilate is going to announce three times that as far as he is concerned there is absolutely no basis for the charges brought against Jesus by the Jews. He does that here in verse 38. He is going to do it again in 19:4 and he is going to do it one last time in 19:6.

Now there is one other point. Pilate offered to free a prisoner of the Jews own choosing. He offered to free Jesus and note his barb to the Jews, "**Shall I release the King of the Jews?**" But the Jews would have none of that. They wanted Barabbas, who was an insurrectionist. Now here is the thing, the name "**Barabbas**" means "**Son of the Father**" and contributes to the deep irony of the moment. You see the Jews plead for the release of the rebellious "**Son of the Father**" and turned their backs on the faithful "**Son of the Father.**" The whole idea seems to be rich with the image of substitution, the righteous for the unrighteous, the innocent for the guilty, the clean for the unclean.

Still, Pilate tries one last thing to sate the anger of the mob. Look at 19:1-5.

^{NIV} **John 19:1**...Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, "**Hail, king of the Jews!**" And they struck him in the face. ⁴ 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.**" ⁵ When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "**Here is the man!**"

This last phrase, "**Behold the Man**" is extraordinary. Most commentators think that Pilate was trying to turn down their anger by presenting Jesus to the crowd humiliated and beaten. Listen to Chrysostom:

Pilate scourged Him perhaps desiring to exhaust and to soothe the fury of the Jews. For when he had not been able to deliver Him by his former measures,

being anxious to stay the evil at this point, he scourged Him, and permitted to be done what was done, the robe and crown to be put on Him, so as to relax their anger. Wherefore also he led Him forth to them crowned, that, seeing the insult, which had been done to Him, they might recover a little from their passion, and vomit their venom.²⁴

Listen to Augustine:

"If you hate your king, spare him now when you see him sunk so low; he has been scourged, crowned with thorns, clothed with the garments of derision, jeered at with the bitterest insults, struck with the open hand; his *shame can be no greater, let your hatred come to an end.*"²⁵

Really, it is as if Pilate is saying. **"Here's the man you fear. Now tell me, What is there to fear? He's undone; He's humiliated and bruised and beaten. Don't you see that He is finished?"** Verse 6, tells us however that his argument was to no avail.

^{NIV} **John 19:6a...**As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, **"Crucify! Crucify!"**

Pilate was perhaps surprised when the priests and their officials showed the exact opposite of the compassion that he had hoped for. They were shouting out, **"You crucify. You crucify."** It is not just that they want Jesus crucified. They wanted Pilate to do it. They were ordering Pilate to do it. They remind me of those bloodsucking leeches described in Proverbs, the ones that cry out, **"More, more."** (Proverbs 30:15)

^{NIV} **John 19:6b...**But Pilate answered, **"You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."** ⁷ The Jews insisted, **"We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."**

This statement got Pilate's attention all over again. It was one thing for the man to claim to be a pretender king; it was altogether something else for a man to claim to be the Son of God. The text starting in verse 8 says Pilate went back in even more afraid than he had been. You can sense that fear in Pilate even as he tries to bully Jesus.

^{NIV} **John 19:8**...When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, ⁹ and he went back inside the palace. **"Where do you come from?"** he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ **"Do you refuse to speak to me?"** Pilate said. **"Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"** ¹¹ 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."**

Now the issue of what Jesus meant by **"the one who handed me over to you"** is hard to resolve. My first impulse is to let the grammar say what the grammar says. That is, the one person, Judas, who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin. But it could be a proverbial use and then, of course, the Jewish leaders or perhaps even the high priest would have been meant.²⁶

^{NIV} **John 19:12**... 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."** ¹³ 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). ¹⁴ It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. **"Here is your king,"** Pilate said to the Jews. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.

Now we come at last to the climax of this scene and the climax seems as if it involves two decisions, one by Pilate and one by the Jewish leaders. It seemed to Pilate, of course, that he had to make a decision about whether to dispense justice or to please Caesar and the mob? The Jews too seemed to have a decision. Were they going to do what their law commanded or were they going to seek to maintain their place and standing before Rome? But actually they only had to make one decision. The one thing they both had to decide was what were they going to do with Jesus? And it is the same decision for us this morning. Are we going to endure in our faith and confidence in Jesus or are we going to cave into the pressure of an unbelieving world. Of course, from my theological perspective were it not for the faithfulness and endurance of Jesus graciously watching over and strengthening us not a one of us would endure.

My prayer for you this morning is that our Heavenly Father will open your eyes to see His love for you in Christ's atoning death. My prayer that as you behold the man shamed and roughly handled that God will give you insight to say,

“Behold, it is the king of glory, strong and mighty to save. Oh, ancient doors lift up your heads that the king of glory may come in. Who is this king of glory? The Lord, He is the King of Glory.”

¹ F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 339. Jesus now leaves the upper room and leads his disciples out of the city eastwards down into the Kidron valley and up the other side. *Kidron* reproduces the Hebrew spelling and pronunciation; the word is derived from a root meaning ‘dark’ (from which comes also OT *Kedar*, an Arab community so called from their black tents, mentioned in Cant. 1:5). *Kedron* here as in the LXX (2 Sam. 15:23, etc.), represents the Greek spelling and pronunciation. Some copyists or editors of the NT text misunderstood it here to be related to Gk. *kedros* (‘cedar’) and changed the form of the definite article before it so as to yield the sense ‘the ravine of the cedars’ which is quite inappropriate. The word translated ‘ravine’ is Gk. *eimarrhous*, meaning literally a stream that flows in winter; here denotes a wadi, dry for the greater part of the year but a torrent rainy seasons. The Kidron valley (*Wadi en-Nar*) pursues a long winding course southeast to the Dead Sea, down which Ezekiel his vision saw the river flowing which rose under the sanctuary threshold (Ezek. 47:1 ff.; cf. Zech. 14:8).’ Opposite the temple the bottom of the valley is over 200 feet below the platform of the outer court. East of the valley rises the Mount of Olives, on lower slopes of which was the ‘garden’ to which Jesus and his disciples went. Mark (14:32) and Matthew (26:36) call it Gethsemane, ‘(the place of) the oil-press’. This was no doubt the place to which Jesus went night by night during Holy Week (Luke 21:37), John may mean that it had served as a rendezvous for him and disciples during earlier visits to Jerusalem also.

² Shimon Gibson, and David M. Jacobson, *Below the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (Oxford: British Archaeological Review, 1996), 191-223. There are all kinds of varying opinions about the issue of the blood draining into the Kidron. Early archaeologists seemed to find drains everywhere they dug in Jerusalem. Modern archaeologists see those drains more likely to be connected to an elaborate system of cisterns that held runoff rainwater. Still, the number of animals sacrificed and the enormous mess that would have made would have demanded some sort of drainage system. Included below are some general quotes from the above book and from the Mishnah, which seems to me to have to be viewed as somewhat authoritative. First, Gibson AND Jacobson:

The first to show interest in the water conduits of the *Haram* was the French traveler and scholar, Félicien (Caignart) de Saulcy (1807- 1880), who visited Jerusalem in 1850-51. De Saulcy [1865,11,9-1] was quick to see a connection between these channels and the sacrificial ritual practiced in the ancient Jewish Temple, believing that the system of underground passages that he explored beneath the Triple Gate were used to flush out the animal remains connected with the sacrifices and other refuse from the Temple Courts.

Pierotti [P I 864. II, P1. XI] took a wider interest in them. He, like de Saulcy and other 19th century explorers of the *Haram*, supposed that there was a link between some of the cisterns and conduits and the sacrifices practiced in the Temple many centuries ago. Pierotti [P 1864, 1, 91] cited the statement in the Mishnah, that from under the altar of burnt-offerings there led a conduit through which the blood sprinkled on it was washed with water which flowed into the Kidron Valley [Mishnah, *Yoma* 5:6; cf. *Shekalim* 4:2; *Zebahim* 8:7-9, 8:11; *Temurah*. 7:6; *Tamid* 5:5; *Middoth* 3:2].

Connected with this whole idea is the small cave below the central rock in the Dome of the Rock. That rock has a hole in it, which many have believed to be a blood drain. One prominent archaeologist named C.W. Wilson first held the view and then gave it up. The following two quotes are from him and included in Gibson and Jacobson's work above (p.285).

"The rock stands 4 feet 9 1/2 inches (= 1.46 m) above the marble pavement at its highest point, and 1 foot at its lowest; it is one of the 'missae' strata, and has a dip of 11 in a direction 85° east of north. The surface of the rock bears the marks of bard treatment and rough chiseling; on the western side it is cut down in three steps, and on the northern side in an irregular shape, the object of which could not be discovered. Near and a little to the east of the door leading to the chamber below are a number of small rectangular holes cut in the rock, as if to receive the foot of a railing or screen, and at the same place is a circular opening, communicating with the cave, which may either have been the mouth of a cistern or the ventilator of a tomb, for similar openings were found in the vestibules of most of the large tombs round Jerusalem, either for light and ventilation or to facilitate the excavation. The entrance to the cave is by a flight of steps on the south-east, passing under a doorway with a pointed arch, which looks like an addition of the Crusaders; the chamber is not very large, with an average height of six feet (= 1.8 m); its sides are so covered with plaster and whitewash that it is impossible to see any chisel marks, but the surface appears to be rough and irregular; on tapping the sides a hollow sound is produced, which the Moslems bring forward as proof of their legend that the rock is suspended in the air, but after careful examination and trying places where no hollow could exist, it was found to arise from defective plastering, the plaster having become separated from the rock in much the same way as two coats do in careless and bad plasterers' work in England, where the defect is discovered by the wall producing the same sort of hollow sound. There may be a small opening in the side, but certainly no large one, unless it is blocked up with masonry. The floor of the cave is paved with marble, and produces a hollow sound when stamped upon, not merely over the mouth of the supposed well, but over nearly the whole surface" [W 1866, 34].

Later, Wilson appears to have firmed in his view that the cave originated as a tomb rather than as part of a drainage system:

"The cave beneath the rock is similar to others in the neighborhood of the city; it may have been enlarged, but any marks of chiseling on the sides are now concealed by a thick coat of plaster. The circular opening in the roof of the cave looks like the mouth of a cistern, but it has not the usual marks left by the draw ropes; it is somewhat similar in character to the openings often found in the vestibules of tombs. No trace could be found of any drains connecting the Bir el Arwali beneath the cave with the fountain of the Virgin and Siloam; the system of drainage given by de Vogüé in his 'Temple de Jerusalem,' on the authority of Pierotti is purely imaginary, and has no existence on the ground" [W 1871, 14].

Finally, here a couple of quotes from the Mishnah explaining why archaeologists were looking for drains.

C.f. Jacob Neusner, (trans.) *The Mishnah "Yoma"* 5:6, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 274.

A. He tossed the blood on the top of the altar seven times.

- B. Then did he pour out the residue of the blood onto the western base of the outer altar.
- C. And that [the residue of the blood sprinkled on] the outer altar he poured out on the southern base.
- D. The two streams of blood then mingled together in the [flow of the] surrounding channel and flowed down into the Qidron brook.
- E. They are sold to gardeners for fertilizer.
- F. And the law of sacrilege applies to them [until the sale].

C.f. Neusner, (trans.) *The Mishnah "Middoth" 3:2*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 878.

- A. And at the southwestern corner [of the foundation] were two holes,
- B. like two narrow nostrils,
- C. through which the drops of blood which are tossed on the western foundation and on the southern foundation descend and mix together in the channel and go forth to Qidron brook [M. Tam. 4:1].

³ Bruce, 316. Bruce writes in his footnotes: "It has sometimes been supposed that after 'Rise up; let us be on our way' at the end of chapter 14 Jesus and the disciples were now moving towards the Kidron valley and Olivet, and that the words about the vine were suggested by the sight of the great golden vine overhanging the main entrance to the sanctuary proper (Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.210; *Antiquities* 15.395; Tacitus, *Histories* s.s; Mishnah, tractate *Middoth* 3.8). This supposition (made, e.g., by J. Pickl, *The Messiah*, p. 180) is, however, quite improbable." I have to say that I don't see why it is so improbable. I take it that once Jesus says, "Arise, let us go" they actually do just that.

Cf. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 16.11.3 (Electronic Edition) Josephus describes the vines thus: "The temple had doors also at the entrance, and lintels over them, of the same height with the temple itself. They were adorned with embroidered veils, with their flowers of purple, and pillars interwoven; and over these, but under the crown-work, was spread out a golden vine, with its branches hanging down from a great height, the largeness and fine workmanship of which was a surprising sight to the spectators, to see what vast materials there were, and with what great skill the workmanship was done. He also encompassed the entire temple with very large cloisters, contriving them to be in a due proportion thereto; and he laid out larger sums of money upon them than had been done before him, till it seemed that no one else had so greatly adorned the temple as he had done. There was a large wall to both the cloisters, which wall was itself the most prodigious work that was ever heard of by man."

⁴ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. (Mclean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing), 533-4. Edersheim includes a lovely description of Gethsemane. "Passing out of the gate north of the Temple, we descend into a lonely part of the valley of black Kidron, at that season swelled into a winter torrent. Crossing it, we turn somewhat to the left, -where the road leads towards Olivet. Not many steps farther (beyond and on the other side Of the present Church of the Sepulcher of the Virgin) we turn aside from the road to the right, and reach what tradition has since earliest times—and probably correctly—pointed "as 'Gethsemane,' the 'Oil-press.' It was a small property enclosed 'a garden' in the Eastern sense, where probably, amidst a variety of fruit trees and flowering shrubs, was a. lowly, quiet summer-retreat, connected with, or near by, the 'Olive-press.' The present Gethsemane is only some seventy steps square, and

though its old gnarled olives cannot be those (if such there were) of the time of Jesus, since all trees in that valley—those also which stretched their shadows over Jesus—were hewn down in the Roman siege, they may have sprung from the old roots, or from the odd kernels. But we love to think of this ‘Garden’ as the place where Jesus ‘often’—not merely on this occasion, but perhaps on previous visits to Jerusalem—gathered with His disciples. It was a quiet resting-place, for retirement, prayer, perhaps sleep, and a trysting *place* also where not only the Twelve, but others also, may have been wont to meet the Master. And as such it was known to Judas, and thither he led the armed band, when they found the Upper Chamber no longer occupied by Jesus and His disciples. Whether it had been intended that He should spend part of the night there, before returning to the Temple, and whose that enclosed garden was—the other Eden, in which the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, bore the penalty of the first, and in obeying gained life—we know not, a perhaps ought not to inquire. It may have belonged to Mark’s father. But if otherwise, Jesus had loving disciples even in Jerusalem, we rejoice to think, not only a home at Bethany, and an Upper Chamber furnished in the City, but a quiet retreat and trysting-place for His own under the bosom of Olivet, in the shadow of the garden of ‘the Oil-press.’”

⁵ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 577.

⁶ B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954), 251. Westcott quotes Polybius’ use of the word to mean manicle.

⁷ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-1954), vol. 2, 379. Hendriksen waxes especially eloquent here.

⁸ The phrase that is used to describe the soldiers turning back is the same used in 6:66.

C.f. ^{NIV} **John 6:66** From this time many of his disciples turned back (avph/lqon eivj ta. ovpi,sw) and no longer followed him.

⁹ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 577.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 576. Ridderbos says this event must not be viewed spatially. He says it displays rather the eschatological or transcendent character of Jesus. I think that it is a fancy way of saying it is a metaphor and didn’t really happen. I totally disagree!

¹¹ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1966), vol. 2, 811.

¹² F.F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 64.

¹³ B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954), 266. Westcott writes: “On the other hand, if Annas was really the soul of the Sadducean faction, nothing would be more natural than that he should provide for a preliminary interrogation which might decide the course to be taken in the Sanhedrin. There might still be opposition there. As it was, the accusers were in fact driven to seek evidence from the Lord’s hearers, and to

confess that it was inadequate for their purpose. Thus baffled, they called forth, under the most solemn circumstances, His great confession as Messiah. It may be added that some time necessarily elapsed between the arrest of the Lord and His appearance before the formal session of the Sanhedrin. This interval gave opportunity for the private examination. The details of the various examinations, which St John has preserved, all bear upon the universal aspect of Christ's work its openness, self-justification, truthfulness dependence upon the divine will. It will further be noticed that as St John alone gives the private examination before Annas, so also he alone gives the private examination before Pilate. He was probably present at both."

¹⁴ C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 425. Dodd writes: "Nothing is said of the charge of blasphemy preferred against Jesus in the High Priest's court, or of His confession of Messiahship on the same occasion. But, as we have seen, both these themes have had a place in the Book of Signs (x. 30-9). This omission therefore is not due to theological motives." My response to Dodd would be that perhaps it is rather by literary design.

¹⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1966), vol. 2, 842.

¹⁶ Neusner, (trans.) *The Mishnah "Ohalot" 18:7B & 18:9A*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 980. 18:7B. "Dwelling places of gentiles [in the Land of Israel] are unclean." 18:9A. "Colonnades are not subject to the law applying to the dwellings of gentiles."

C.f. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John (Rvd.)* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 675. Morris writes: "Any Jew who entered such a dwelling would immediately contract defilement, a defilement that lasted seven days. This would effectively prevent him from observing the feast." Also...^{NIV} **Numbers 9:6**... But some of them could not celebrate the Passover on that day because they were ceremonially unclean on account of a dead body. So they came to Moses and Aaron that same day ⁷ and said to Moses, "We have become unclean because of a dead body, but why should we be kept from presenting the LORD's offering with the other Israelites at the appointed time?" ⁸ Moses answered them, "Wait until I find out what the LORD commands concerning you." ⁹ Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹⁰ "Tell the Israelites: 'When any of you or your descendants are unclean because of a dead body or are away on a journey, they may still celebrate the LORD's Passover. ¹¹ They are to celebrate it on the fourteenth day of the second month at twilight. They are to eat the lamb, together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ¹² They must not leave any of it till morning or break any of its bones. When they celebrate the Passover, they must follow all the regulations.

¹⁷ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John V29a* 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 846. They viewed Gentile women as unclean because they did not believe they managed their monthly cycles as Jewish women did.

¹⁸ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 588.

¹⁹ Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel V.2* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1942), 616. Hoskyns has a slightly different view: "The Jews conduct the prisoner to Pilate in order that he

may pronounce and carry out the sentence of death by crucifixion, this being the normal Roman capital punishment for sedition (Hastings, 'Dict. of the Bible' under 'Cross'). Pilate demands to know the nature of the accusation brought against the prisoner. On being told that He is an evildoer, Pilate authorizes the Jews to proceed according to their Law. This may mean merely that he supposes that the case does not involve capital punishment, and therefore lies within the competence of the Jews. But more probably *according to your law* is meant to imply that Pilate definitely authorizes the Jews to sentence the prisoner and to inflict punishment by stoning, this being the legal penalty for blasphemy, breaking the Sabbath, and other offences against the Jewish Law (Exod. 31:14, 35:2; Lev. 24:10-24; Deut. 12:5-10; John 8:5-7, 10:31; Luke 20: 6; Acts 7:58, 15:5). This is, however, not at all what the Jews intend. The prisoner must be crucified, not stoned (19:6). That is, He must die in public as guilty of sedition, not of blasphemy; and Pilate alone can effect this."

C.f. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John (Rvd.)* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 677-8. Morris argues that Caiaphas wanted to attach the shame of being accused by God to Jesus by invoking Deuteronomy 21:23. It reads: "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."

²⁰ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1985), 1264. Boice writes: "Pilate was not a noble character. In fact, if it were not for his influential connections through marriage, he would never have come even to the relatively insignificant post he held as procurator of Judea. He came from Spain being a native of Seville. He had joined the legions of Germanicus in the wars on the Rhine. After peace had been secured, he went to Rome to make his fortune. There he met and married Claudia Procula, the youngest daughter of Julia who was the daughter of the emperor Augustus. From the perspective of Pilate's future this was a wise move. Claudia had connections with the highest levels of Roman government. But morally it was a disgrace; for Julia, who thereby became Pilate's mother-in-law, was a woman of such depraved and coarse habits that even in decadent Rome she was notorious. Augustus, her father, avoided her presence and eventually banished her. It is reported that afterward, whenever someone would mention the name of his daughter to him, Augustus would exclaim, "Would I were wifeless or had childless died!" Unlike Pilate, a man of nobler instincts would not have married into such a family."

²¹ The three incidents are attested in both Josephus and Philo. Though some thing the incident with the ensigns and the one with shields are really the same event. Cf. Philo, *Legatio* p.299-305 and Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3 & *Wars of the Jews* 2.9, 2-4

²² A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (London: Oxford, 1963), 47.

²³ The NET Bible has a very helpful study note here, which I quote in part: "... Pilate was of the equestrian order, that is, of lower nobility as opposed to senatorial rank. As such he would have been eligible to receive such an honor. It also appears that the powerful Sejanus was his patron in Rome, and Sejanus held considerable influence with Tiberius. Tacitus (*Annals* 6.8) quotes Marcus Terentius in his defense before the Senate as saying that close friendship with Sejanus "was in

every case a powerful recommendation to the Emperor's friendship." Thus it is possible that Pilate held this honor. Therefore it appears that the Jewish authorities were putting a good deal of psychological pressure on Pilate to convict Jesus. They had, in effect, finally specified the charge against Jesus as treason: "Everyone who makes himself to be king opposes Caesar." If Pilate now failed to convict Jesus the Jewish authorities could complain to Rome that Pilate had released a traitor. This possibility carried more weight with Pilate than might at first be evident: (1) Pilate's record as governor was not entirely above reproach; (2) Tiberius, who lived away from Rome as a virtual recluse on the island of Capri, was known for his suspicious nature, especially toward rivals or those who posed a political threat; and (3) worst of all, Pilate's patron in Rome, Sejanus, had recently come under suspicion of plotting to seize the imperial succession for himself. Sejanus was deposed in October of AD 31. It may have been to Sejanus that Pilate owed his appointment in Judea. Pilate was now in a very delicate position. The Jewish authorities may have known something of this and deliberately used it as leverage against him. Whether or not they knew just how potent their veiled threat was, it had the desired effect. Pilate went directly to the judgment seat to pronounce his judgment."

²⁴ John Chrysostom, *The Gospel of John*, Homilies on John No. 84. Ages CDRom, 696.

²⁵ Aurelius Augustine, *The Gospel of John*, Tractate XIX, 862. (The Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers First Series, Volume 7 Ages CDRom) Modernized by me with apologies to Augustine.

Cf. John Calvin, *Commentary on John* (Calvin CDRom by Ages), 606.

²⁶ George R. Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 36: John*, (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, Publisher) 1998. "The identity of him who has "the greater sin" than Pilate is uncertain. It is natural to think of Judas, in view of 13:21 (the same verb is used in both sentences, παραδώσει the future in prospect, παραδού", the past tense, since it has happened); yet Judas disappears after leading the soldiers and police to Jesus (18:13), and he had no part in handing over Jesus to Pilate. Since the Jewish leaders are mentioned in 18:28 as together bringing Jesus to Pilate, it is suggested that they collectively are in mind (e.g., Bultmann, 662; Lindars, 569; Schnackenburg, 3:261-62). Yet the contrast between οJ paradou" and Pilate more naturally applies to an individual, in which case Caiaphas, the head of the Jewish hierarchy that delivered up Jesus to Pilate, is the most likely person in view. He was the prime mover in instigating Jesus' death (11:49-53), and he was responsible for eliciting and formulating the charge that Jesus was king of the Jews and guilty of blasphemy (Mark 14:61-64), of which the Evangelist shows his awareness. Like Pilate, he was given authority over Jesus, but he abused it, and for political expediency handed Jesus over to Pilate on a trumped-up charge of sedition to secure his death. For this reason Pilate, though a guilty man, was not so guilty as the High Priest of God."