

John 18:12-18

So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.

Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. Then the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself.

For all of the underlying intrigue in this story to make any sense we need to first discover a bit about Annas and Caiaphas, the main players in this part of the story. If you remember our study back in ***Chapter 1***, we discovered that the office of the high priest had become somewhat of an artificial edifice and a religious abomination. According to ***Exodus 28*** only a true descendent of Aaron was authorized to hold the office of High Priest. But as far back as 240 B.C. the office started to be used as a political appointment by the foreign powers that ruled the territory and non-Aaronic, but politically ambitious, men were given the

appointment. Often it was based only upon who committed to collect the most tax and pay the largest tribute. Even the famed Hasmonaean priesthood who took over during the Maccabean revolt (around 167 B.C.) could only be traced to a Levitical line of priests but not an Aaronic line.

An example of how this political game was played can be found in the story of Pilate's predecessor (Valerius Gratus -- 15-26 A.D.). Gratus had dismissed not only Annas but 3 other high priests before he settled on Caiaphas, who was Annas' son-in-law (neither of which were an actual descendent of Aaron). This gives us an indication that behind the scenes Caiaphas was considered more of a friend to Rome than he was to his own people. In Caiaphas, Gratus found a man he could trust and apparently when Pilate took over as governor he agreed for he left him in office when he could have easily had him dismissed for his own political lackey.

It might seem strange that the first place they took Jesus after His arrest was to Annas and not directly to the powers that be. But this is really not that strange at all when you consider a few facts. First of all Annas was still a very powerful man. Even though he was previously disposed of the office of High Priest he still had some control on the reins of power within the Jewish community and was influential with the Romans. Over the years, 5 of his own sons would fill the office of High Priest; so he was still, as we would say, highly connected into the institutional power structure. And we know from **Acts 4:6** that Annas still played a strong role in the Sanhedrin, the governing body of the Jews, who would ultimately be responsible to pass the verdict on Jesus' so called crimes.

We also know from every encounter that we have read in the Gospel of John between Jesus and the religious leaders that they were anything but God fearing

men. We know they were constantly plotting and scheming in order to preserve their political standing. Protecting their position and power was their primary concern; they would let no one threaten or jeopardize it. Make no mistake, even the arrest of Jesus was the result of a pre-planned collaboration of the entire power structure. They wanted Jesus to go down and they waited until they had their opportunity, their traitor, and the perfect timing when Pilate would be in town. You see Pilate would always come to Jerusalem whenever there was any major festival; and, take note, his presence was the key to their diabolical plan.

But there was one problem, they had no crime and they had no valid witnesses to any wrongdoing. We find out from the other gospel stories that this was a big problem. All their so called witnesses contradicted each other and they could not get confirmation on any one accusation. Remember, according to the law all they needed was 2 witnesses to attest to the same facts. But they could not even find 2. They eventually did bring in a string of false witnesses hoping that there would be something to work with, but still no 2 could testimonies could be lined up to support a single accusation. They knew they had a serious problem, so it was likely that they brought Jesus to Annas to try and intimidate Him hoping to force out some confession where Jesus would indict himself so the whole need for witnesses would be moot and the case could be very clean and the “official” trial very quick when presented to Caiaphas and the entire Sanhedrin.

Just so you know, it is also more than likely that Annas and Caiaphas lived in the same “palace” together (being “in-laws”) but had living quarters in different parts of the complex. The large homes in those days had a fence which closed off to the street and when you entered through the gate there was an open

quadrangle and the buildings were on the outside of this open aired space. So taking Jesus to Annas first and then to Caiaphas was not that big of a logistical deal; it was probably just the other side of the complex. Their living in different parts of the same complex also helps reconcile the other gospel accounts in terms of where Peter was located when he uttered each denial.

So that is enough of Annas and Caiaphas for now as the passage segues to the story of Peter and his first denial. Peter had been following “another” disciple, whom we don’t know but most people presume is the writer of this gospel because of the fact that this “other” disciple was known to the High Priest and the writer of this gospel was also very well acquainted with the household of the High Priest. He obviously knew Malchus, the High Priests servant, by name and we will discover that he also knew a relative of Malchus who was one of the people that accused Peter.

In addition, the author included all sorts of detail regarding the events of that evening which could only have been given by someone who was an eye-witness to the events. For example: Peter being left at the gate, the “other” disciple gaining his entry, the gatekeeper who was a slave-“girl” (not just a slave) who made the first accusation against Peter, Peter warming himself by a not just a fire but a charcoal fire, the slaves and the officers were standing around the fire, and the fact that it was a cold evening. There are just too many precise details that would only be known by someone who was there—the “other” disciple.

Although the author of this gospel never gave us his name (just like the author’s name is not included in any of the 3 other epistles attributed to John), church history has uniformly attributed this gospel (and the 3 other epistles) to

the disciple, John. It is believed by some that the reason John referred to himself in such non-descriptive ways (the disciple whom Jesus loved and the “other” disciple) is because he was actually Jesus’ cousin and he did not want any undue attention to be drawn to their relationship.

After Jesus was born Joseph and Mary had a family (4 boys and 3 sisters). One of Jesus’ ½ sisters was named Salome who is said to have married Zebedee. Zebedee was the father of James and John, both of whom were disciples. Did you ever wonder why Zebedee did not freak when he was working with his sons mending nets and Jesus called to the boys and they just immediately left and followed Him? Perhaps it makes a little more sense now doesn’t it? And it is likely because of this family connection that Jesus entrusted his mother into John’s care before he died.

In Mark’s Gospel (**Mark 15:40; 16:1**) we also find that when Jesus was in Galilee Salome used to follow him and minister to his needs (and I am sure to her boy’s needs as well). Salome was also one of the women with Mary Magdalene who was present at Jesus death and she also came with Mary on that special morning to anoint Jesus with spices and found the empty tomb. So it is likely that John wanted to down play this family connection to not draw any undue attention to him or any of his family members.

It has been said that Matthew wrote his gospel to the Hebrews knowing that God was going to be sending him on to preach the message elsewhere and he wanted the testimony in place when he left. Then Mark and Luke wrote their gospel accounts. All three were presented to John who reviewed and approved them. It was then that John decided to write his account in order to fill in the

periods of time (and the details) that were not included in the other gospel accounts. For example, John gave us many details regarding the first year of Jesus' ministry (approximately the first 5 chapters) where the other gospel accounts move quickly from his birth and testing in the wilderness to the time that John the Baptist was imprisoned (about 1-year into Jesus' ministry). John also gives us heavy coverage of the last 24-hours of Jesus' life up to the ascension (9 out of 21 chapters). So he included what he thought was necessary to complete the story of Jesus life so that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ.

It would have been a lot easier on historians if John would have included his name in this gospel. But I think John did not want anyone or anything to take away from the message of Christ. He knew that people had a tendency to exalt and glorify man when really all glory and honor belongs only to Jesus. Maybe he was aware that he was already somewhat of a legend in his own time with everyone speculating that Jesus said he would not die and thus he would have none of it and left his name out of all of his writings. No glory but to Jesus. No fame but to Jesus.

So let's get back to Peter. He was left out by the gate and, upon prompting by this "other" disciple, he was finally let into the courtyard of the High Priest by the slave-girl who was the gatekeeper. After letting him in, however, she recognized Peter and asked if he was one of Jesus' disciples. Peter quickly said no and went to warm himself by the fire.

We don't know for sure but we can imagine what was going on in Peter's head. He was suddenly put on the spot and self preservation kicked in and before he realized what he had done he had denied Christ. We all know what it is like to be

put on the spot and let out a little lie without even thinking about what we were saying or even why we lied; it was just there at the end of our tongues and was out before we could put our tongue back in place or even get perspective on the situation. But forget the lie, I am sure that was not at the forefront of Peter's mind; he had to have been totally paranoid and freaking out knowing that they knew who he was even though he vehemently tried to hide his identity.

Why do you think Peter was there in the first place and did not flee with all the other disciples? Was it pride (he would not be outdone by John), was it affection, was it rebellion, was it a desire to be in the middle of the action, or was it genuine care and love for Jesus?

With that said, do you ever wonder why the "other" disciple was not given grief by the gatekeeper but only Peter? After all, if he was so well known to the High Priest and his household, it is unlikely that they did not know he had been hanging out with Jesus over the past 3-years or that they did not recognize him out in the Garden when Jesus was arrested. Besides, it clearly says that this "other" disciple entered with Jesus to the court of the High Priest. Further, since this "other" disciple was the one who talked to the slave-girl who was tending to the gate to let in Peter, it is very strange that she did not make some kind of uproar regarding this "other" disciple.

I believe the answers to these questions give us some remarkable insight into our Gatekeeper and the reality that all *flesh* is truly under his control (**John 10:9; 17:2**). Peter was there because Jesus wanted him there. Remember, this testing of Peter was pre-approved by Jesus our true Gatekeeper (we see this in **Luke 22:31**) and was intended to shape and mold Peter into the man Jesus knew he

was going to become. This time of testing was absolutely necessary. In fact, just to be clear, this whole denial by Peter was not about sin and too much has been made about his denial in that regard. This was about Jesus demonstrating to Peter that no matter how hard he wanted to be good, he was not good; for only God is good. No matter how vociferously he proclaimed his loyalty claiming he would die for Jesus, he was simply unable, on his own, to do anything for Jesus. Thus, the reason Peter was there and the slave-girl called him out was so he could fail and come to truly believe, for the first time in his life, that apart from 100% dependence upon Jesus he could do nothing—absolutely nothing!

Think about it. The slave-girl was a tool; the others who would soon bring accusation against Peter were also just tools. They were in the perfect place at the perfect time and yet they completely ignored the “other” disciple and only went after Peter according to God’s perfect plan. These unbelievers were just tools in the hands of Almighty God to accomplish His purposes in Peter’s life. They were there only to bring accusation against Peter; they could bring no harm, as Peter walked away untouched, just accusation.

To me this is not only amazing and beautiful but it also gives me great comfort and assurance. Too often we see opposition, attack, difficulty, and so on, in our life as a curse or an unfair affliction when it is really just God—our Gatekeeper—using the tools available to Him to accomplish His purposes in our life. He uses all things in order to teach us that 1) we must fully trust ourselves 100% to His care, His plan and His purposes for our life and 2) that we can in no way depend upon ourselves to do anything right. God uses anything and everything to get His

children to believe in the following perfectly imbalanced equation: 100% Jesus living in and through our lives and 0% us.

John 18:19-24

The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret." Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said." When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Now the story moves back to Jesus and His interaction with Annas who in verse 19 is called "The high priest." Don't be thrown off by that for under Jewish law a High Priest was appointed for life; so even though the politics of the day resulted in Annas having been removed from the office he would have still carried that title and recognized as such. It's the same way that we still call former Presidents by that title even though they no longer possess the office.

Annas then questioned Jesus about His disciples and about His teaching. I guess he wanted names and locations of Jesus' posse in the event they needed to round them up and either stop any attempt by them to further any of Jesus' activities, as if they were some band of dangerous criminals, or to elicit much needed

testimony from them against Jesus. And I am sure they were also hoping Jesus would say something during this interrogation that would incriminate Him.

But look at Jesus' response; He not only shuts them down He also brings an indictment against their entire proceedings and ways of dealing. He contrasts the way He operated (open, in public, in the holy places where those who were interested in spiritual matters were gathered, which would have always been during the day) with the way they were doing everything in secret, in private, at night, and in their homes, where the only people who witnessed their evil deeds were those they controlled.

You would think that after all of their encounters with Jesus where they were always left completely humiliated and dumbfounded that they would have learned their lesson. But obviously they are a little slow and maybe a little too arrogant; but most definitely they are much too desperate to find something, anything, they can use against Him.

It is clear that those present understood the indictment that Jesus just laid against them which is why the officer became furious and broke the law and punched Jesus. Keep in mind it would have been an outrage to any true priest for any person accused of a crime to be harmed before he was condemned. Under Jewish law, the accused were supposed to be under the protection of the law until they were actually proven guilty. But Annas did not care for he was obviously not a true priest and had no heart for the law of God.

Further, it is clear that Jesus said nothing wrong for they could not testify of the wrong; and with this statement He once again brought indictment against their evil. They think they are in control, they think they can judge, and Jesus, the one

who would judge their eternal destiny, is just turning the spotlight of truth on their sin. Empty handed, having failed to obtain any evidence, they just decided to move on and they took Jesus to Caiaphas.

John 18:25-27

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it, and said, "I am not." One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

Now we get to the final two denials punctuated with the sound of the rooster. Even if Peter was filled with remorse for his first denial, even if it was a slip of the tongue, these final two were all Peter. He was surrounded with nowhere to run and all he could do is continue in the lie that he started. Luke tells us that at that moment Jesus turned from where he was in the residence, presumably on a deck overlooking the courtyard, and looked at Peter and Peter remembering Jesus' prediction left the courtyard crying bitterly (***Luke 22:61-62***). Could you imagine the guilt and terror that must have filled his soul? I am actually quite surprised that Peter did not take the route that Judas chose and killed himself. This must have been so intense and the emotional and psychological pressure unbearable.

A quick side note to once again emphasize the obvious. If the writer of this gospel was not an eye-witness, how would he have known that the slave who brought the final accusation against Peter was a relative of Malchus and was

present in the Garden? I am absolutely confident that the “other” disciple was none other than the writer of this Gospel, the apostle John.

Now, the detail about the rooster crowing is also a very important detail that will speak volumes to us beyond just the fulfillment of Jesus’ prediction in **John 13:38** where He said: “Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.” We will get to an explanation, but for now take note that they arrested Jesus in the middle of the night and dragged him to Annas’ house. And if this was the first crow of the rooster, as Jesus said that a rooster would not crow until Peter had denied Him, it would have been between 12 and 3 a.m. when they took Jesus from Annas to Caiaphas for his trial. It was not in the light but in the deep darkness of night that their plot would unfold.

The gospel of John gives us no details at all about the trial before Caiaphas and the entire gathering of the Sanhedrin, where they sought to obtain convicting testimony from all those false witnesses. Again, John must have felt that **Matthew 26** and **Mark 14** had covered that scene adequately and did not feel the need to repeat any of it. So he picks up the story again very early in the morning as they proceed to the Praetorium to start pressing their case with Pilate—one of the final players in their fiendish plan.

John 18:28

Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.

This verse might just stand all alone in the “hypocrisy” Hall of Fame. These religious leaders should all have their own star on the famous liar boulevard. This verse highlights the absolute hardness of heart, duplicity, and incredulity of these religious leaders. They won’t enter the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. Come on; give me a break—so they won’t be defiled? Ha, this is ridiculous. They arrested a man without charge. They illegally tried him both before Annas and the leading priests and entire high counsel, they struck Him without cause, they held the trial not in a courtroom but in the house of the High Priest and they conducted this atrocity at night—all of which were violations of the law and made them entirely and completely “unclean” and unqualified to participate in Passover.

We already talked about the fact that striking a person before they were convicted was against the law, but consider the following. The official court room was in the temple grounds itself and that is where Jesus should have been tried. The Sanhedrin used to hold proceedings in a room called Gazith. ½ of this room sat in the Holy Place and the other ½ was in the court of the Israelites where Jewish men could gather. The judges sat in the Holy Place as a way to testify to the purity of their judgment confirming that they had not been corrupted or biased in carrying out any sentence, all in compliance with ***Deuteronomy 16***.

But the trial of Jesus was not taking place in the Gazith, but in the High Priests home because there was no purity or integrity in their judgment; in fact, if they would have entered Gazith they would have stood condemned before God and even these cretins had a healthy fear for the Holy Place. Besides, the Sanhedrin had not even used the Gazith for many years. There was so much bias, corruption,

and self-dealing in their community that everyone was afraid to be held to the standard of **Deuteronomy 16**. So they moved the official court room out of the holy place to a room called the Taberne which was still on the temple mount but which allowed them to not have to tempt their fate in the Holy Place.

We found an example of their deep corruption and self-dealing in our study in **Chapter 8** regarding the woman they had caught in adultery and brought to Jesus for judgment. We discovered that this was a total set up that was obvious to everyone for during this time the religious community would not only **not** punish the crime of adultery they would not even put a person accused of adultery to test according to the law of jealousy found in **Numbers 5:11-31**. Every one of them was either guilty or complicit of the same crime and was deeply afraid of the waters of jealousy so they just skipped over that part—not necessary.

Further, the trials which Jesus suffered were at night; He was interrogated at night and judged at night. According to the Talmud, criminal processes could neither commence nor terminate except during the day. And if the person was acquitted of the accusations made against them the sentence could only be pronounced during the day. And if the person was to be condemned, the sentence could not be pronounced until the next day giving time for there to be any final contradictory testimony to the conviction. But either way, no judgment or pronouncement was to be delivered either on the eve of the Sabbath, or the eve of any festival (like the Passover).

Nevertheless, these so called priests and the members of the high counsel broke every rule of law. Every aspect of justice was violated in the case of Jesus and they did not even blink an eye. They just kept pressing on with their agenda

and took Jesus to Pilate. So with all that having been said, how could they have been legitimately worried about becoming “unclean” and thereby not being able to eat the Passover? Surely they knew the law and were well aware that they were violating the law. In fact, I really don’t think they were at all blind to their abject hypocrisy; it just did not matter to them. They had a plan and even their pushing to get Jesus killed before Passover was all a part of their evil strategy. Time was of the essence and so they moved with all alacrity and dispatch to accomplish their goal.

You see it was not their purity that they were concerned with; it was their *appearance* of purity to the masses. All their evil happened in private, behind closed doors so to speak, where no one knew what they were up to. But if they were to go to Pilate and enter the Prætorium on the eve or day of the Passover, it would be in public and the very people they were hoping (and betting) would turn against Jesus, the very people they would need to convince Pilate that Jesus must die, would have been incensed and their plans for a swift end to Jesus would have fallen apart. In fact, the crowd would have likely turned on them and their great plan foiled.

Remember, this was a well thought out plan to kill Jesus and the intricacies of their plot will become even more evident as our study of this day progresses. But mark my word, these religious leaders were by no means stupid in the ways of evil; in fact, they were ingenious and cunning beyond imagination.

We will stop here and Lord willing pick up in *verse 29* next week.

Let’s Pray