

John 18: Overview and Discussion Questions

After Jesus gave His final teaching to the disciples, they went to a garden. While the other Gospel accounts specifically identify the garden as Gethsemane or the Mount of Olives, John describes this garden as a place when Jesus had often met together with His disciples. In this familiar place, Jesus would be betrayed, setting into motion the events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion. And yet while it may seem that Jesus and the disciples are powerless, and the forces of darkness seem to have the upper hand, nothing could be further from the truth. **Jesus is in absolute control, even while He is being led to His execution.**

Judas enters Gethsemane with an escort of soldiers employed by the Jewish leaders to guard the Temple. Ever since Jesus began His ministry, the Jewish leaders saw Him as a threat to their power and authority. They feared that Jesus was a political Messiah who would not only challenge Roman rule, but also end the privileges and status that they enjoyed under the Romans. On the other hand, Judas wanted a political Messiah and failed to recognize Jesus' divinity and mission. Judas became disillusioned and turned against Jesus when he did not get what he wanted. However, both Judas and the Jewish leaders failed to understand who Jesus was and subsequently underestimated His power. This was evident when Jesus declared who He is to the temple guards. The first time He did this, they all fell to the ground. Jesus used this acknowledgement and display of His divinity to remind His captors that they have no real power over Him, and that if He goes along with them, it is because He willingly submitted Himself to them to fulfill the will of the Father. Jesus also wanted to protect the disciples and avoid bloodshed, which is why He allowed the temple guards to arrest Him and rebuked Peter when he attacked

one of them. **If someone's blood was going to be shed that night, it would only be His blood – shed for the sins of His disciples (including Peter's denial), His persecutors, and for all of humanity.**

Jesus is then brought before Annas, the father-in-law of Caiphas the high priest. It appears that John also refers to Annas as the high priest. This was because Annas had been the previous high priest and had elevated his son-in-law to the position through nepotism. The trial that ensues is anything but fair. The Jewish leaders hoped to find something to incriminate Jesus. But they could not. They had closely watched Jesus for three years. Jesus was blameless and they knew it. When Jesus responded with the truth that they had always known, the Jewish leaders could only respond with violence. Since they did not want to shed the blood of an innocent man, the Jewish leaders turned Jesus over to Pilate, the Roman governor. In the conversation that follows, Pilate finds no fault with Jesus and knows that the accusations of the Jewish leaders are baseless. However, when Jesus told Pilate about His heavenly kingdom, Pilate showed little interest. Because Pilate loved earthly power and riches, he feared that his position would be threatened if he did not appease the Jewish leaders in some way. And so, Pilate attempted a compromise. He resorted to a custom that was practiced during Passover, releasing a prisoner of the people's choice hoping that they would choose Jesus. Instead of Jesus, the crowd chose a criminal named Barabbas.

Everyone involved in Jesus' arrest and trial thought that they had some power over Him. But all their actions, from Caiphas' declaration in [John 11:49-53](#) to the exchange of Jesus for Barabbas, affirmed Jesus' ultimate mission. He would die for humanity's sins and do so willingly.

Read the passage prayerfully a few times over and then answer the questions: [John 18](#)

Questions:

1. What do you learn about Jesus and the disciples from their last moments together in Gethsemane? ([v. 1-11, cf. Matthew 26: 36-56, Mark 14:32-50, Luke 22:39-53](#))
2. How does Jesus engage with the Jewish leaders when they placed Him on trial? What do you learn about the Jewish leaders and their intentions for persecuting Jesus? ([v. 12-14, 19-24, cf. Matthew 26:57-68, Mark 14:53-65](#))
3. What do you learn about Pilate through his conversation with Jesus? ([v. 28-40, cf. Matthew 27:11-26, Mark 15:1-15](#))

Application:

1. How does Jesus' concern for the disciples, as well as His desire to fulfill the will of the Father despite enduring suffering and persecution, inspire you?
2. How does knowing that Jesus died for all sins, even those of His persecutors, deepen your understanding of God's redemptive power?

Conclusion & Heart Prayer:

Lord, what are You saying to me? And what are You calling me to do about it?