

John 18:12-27

Last week we spent some time looking at Jesus' arrest in the garden. We saw how he was in charge and in command of the situation. This week, we will see what happens to Jesus when he goes to trial. We will also be told of Peter's denial of his Lord. Let's get to it!

18:12

This verse is a reaction to the verse before it. Jesus said he had to be arrested in the previous verse. The guards, etc, are simply following his orders when they do what they do in this verse. Jesus is still in control.

18:13

We are not told why he was led to Annas. Nor are we told what happens when Jesus comes face to face with the father-in-law of the high priest. The next dialogue we have is of Jesus speaking with Caiaphas. I suppose you could make something of the relationship between Annas and Caiaphas and Jesus and his legitimate Father, but since John doesn't take us in that direction, we probably shouldn't go there either.

18:14

We have already examined the statements of Caiaphas in John 11 (49-53) and saw the irony in his words that it would be "better for you that one man die for the people." We saw that, though his mindset was on preserving his power as high priest, God used him to accomplish the salvation of the world.

Caiaphas has no idea just how right he really is.

18:15

What's interesting is that most studies on this passage will, in part, focus on the identity of the unnamed disciple. The disciple is usually assumed to be the author of the Gospel, the apostle John. People then go on to talk about what it must have been like to be John, why John had access and Peter did not, etc. Let's play by the rules. Let's assume that John does not give the identity of the other disciple because he either doesn't want us to know who he is or because his identity doesn't matter.

What matters is that the unnamed disciple is allowed in, Peter is not. One assumption that could be that the unnamed disciple is from Jerusalem and/or its vicinity; whereas Peter is from the north, from Galilee.

18:16

Peter is allowed in. I think John spends some time here talking about the admission of a disciple and the inadmissibility of Peter to get the reader to focus on this passage. Now that he has our attention, he will proceed with Peter's denials of Jesus... the real purpose for this text. In other words, the last two verses are here to explain why a servant girl from Jerusalem would talk to a fisherman from Galilee.

18:17

Peter's first denial is simple. She asks a simple question. He gives a simple answer. What's interesting is that she says: "You ALSO..." A closer look at the Greek shows the absence of the word "also," but does include the untranslatable marker "ei." So what? Maybe a better way of translating the passage would be: "And are you not from the disciples of THIS man?" In other words, she is daring him to deny it. Which he does. There's also an outside chance that the servant girl knows that the "other" disciple was a disciple and wants to know if Peter is a disciple like this other disciple. If that is the case, then his denial is especially surprising, as he has already seen that the other disciple was in no danger. (And, keep in mind, Jesus had already said that he would lose none of those whom the Father had given him.)

18:18

A surface reading of this text simply advances the story from one denial and sets the stage for a second denial. And while that's probably all that's going on here, it is worth noting a couple of details:

- Cold (and dark). The fire gives off light. Themes of light and darkness are again in play... as we see Peter gravitating towards darkness, as we will see.
- Both servants and officers were standing together. They are united in their persecution of Jesus.
- Peter does not stand with the other disciple; he stands with the persecutors of Jesus.

18:19

A transition from Peter back to Jesus, who now faces the high priest himself. Ironically, Jesus is doing the work of the Great High Priest testifying to the so-called high priest (whom we will discover is not the true high priest).

18:20

As opposed to the religious leaders, who (back in chapter 11), conspired in secret how they might put Jesus to death. Even though Jesus spoke openly to the world, not even the disciples understood his teaching until he spoke plainly and not in parables (16:30). In John's day, this would also contrast how Jesus taught (nothing in secret, all out in the open) to how the Gnostics taught twisted religion. There is no "secret knowledge" for the privileged few in Christ's church.

18:21

Jesus is done testifying about himself. It is now up to the disciples to bear witness about him. He is a dead man walking. Would you know what to say if someone asked you what the teaching(s) of Jesus is?

18:22

The ironic thing is, as far back as chapter 2, Jesus has taken on the function of the high priest. It is worth noting that guards were not legally allowed to strike witnesses or the accused.

18:23

Jesus quickly shows that the man who hit him was in the wrong. If he spoke something that was incorrect, the officer should have offered a correction. If Jesus spoke nothing

wrong, why, then was he hit? This goes to show that the trial of Jesus was, from the beginning, an illegal proceeding... a sham.

18:24

And now it is revealed to us that the one called “high priest” is not the high priest so much as he is the already-identified-as father-in-law of the high priest. As such, he had no legal right to hear this case. Again, the proceedings are a sham.

18:25

Back to Peter.

Very quickly, after being quizzed by the people with whom he is trying to fit in, Peter denies being a disciple of Jesus. Do we do the same when we try to fit in with the world by downplaying the role Jesus has in our life? Has downplaying the importance of Jesus in our lives ever led to good things in the long-term? (Or even the short-term, for that matter?)

18:26

John gives us way too much information about this man for it not to be important! The servant of the high priest had the name of Malchus, a derivative of the Hebrew word for “king.” This is, in all likelihood, the brother of Malchus, or the “king.” Last week, we showed how Jesus compared to Malchus; now, there’s an obvious comparison to be made between this man and Peter.

His question is even more innocent than the one that preceded it. Peter could have claimed to be in the garden, but not be a disciple of Jesus. He could have been spending the night there while he was in Jerusalem for the Passover feast. He could have been out for a late-night stroll. But Peter will have none of it. He won’t take any chances; he will deny any association with Jesus as well as any potential association with Jesus. Behold, the downward spiral of unbelief!