

JESUS ARRESTED, TRIED, AND SENTENCED TO DEATH

John 18:1-19:16a

Key Verse: 18:37

"'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.'"

Today's passage gives an account of Jesus who was arrested, tried and received the death sentence. The progression of these events could have terrified anyone, due to the evilness of human beings. But in the midst of sufferings, Jesus never revealed his personal sentiment. He was ready to drink the cup of suffering, even though he is the King.

First, Jesus was arrested (18:1-11). As we studied in chapter 17, Jesus prayed the high priestly [prayer](#). Jesus prayed to glorify God's name through his death and resurrection. Jesus prayed for his disciples to be sanctified by the truth. Jesus also prayed for all people of the world to be with him in his kingdom. When Jesus had finished praying the high priestly prayer, he went to the Kidron Valley, where there was an olive grove, which seems to have been a part of the Garden of Gethsemane. Now Jesus went there to pray for himself before the cup of suffering (1). John did not describe Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane in detail (2). Matthew 26:38,39 says, "Then he said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.... My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me'...." Jesus was sorrowful before the cup of death. He prayed all night. As soon as Jesus finished praying, a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees came to arrest him, guided by Judas Iscariot, for he knew the place. Now Judas was betraying Jesus for the sake of 30 [silver coins](#). The soldiers came to arrest Jesus with full armament.

Look at verses 4b,5a. Jesus asked them, "Who is it you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus answered. At the moment Jesus said, "I am he," they were overpowered by the power and authority of Jesus and drew back and fell to the ground. They were as powerless as mosquitoes before a tornado (5,6). When Jesus prayed to obey God's will, God was with him (Lk 22:39-46). The soldiers should have been in control. Instead, Jesus was in control of the situation. Nevertheless, Jesus willingly gave in to his enemies and was arrested to fulfill the will of God (4). Matthew saw Jesus as the King. But Jesus humbled himself and died on the cross in order to take up all our iniquities and transgressions. Most people want to be respected and loved, not humiliated. But Jesus was arrested to take up all our sins and was humiliated like a criminal.

What was Jesus' first concern at the time of crisis? It was his disciples. Jesus surrendered to his enemies. But he asked that his disciples be let go (8). Even at that critical moment, Jesus cared for his disciples. This scene reminds us of John 17:11b which says, "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name." Peter saw that the

soldiers trembled before Jesus' power and authority. On the spur of the moment he became extraordinarily high-spirited. He drew his sword as quick as lightning and cut off the right ear of a servant of the high priest, whose name was Malchus (10). Look at verse 11. "Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?'" Here Jesus clearly states that our battle is not a physical battle, but a spiritual one, and it is a battle for God's salvation purpose for the whole world.

Second, Peter's first denial (18:15-18). Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus when Jesus was arrested and led away to be tried. "Another disciple" may well refer to John, who was known to the high priest (15b). So he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard. But Peter was outside the courtyard. John came out and brought Peter into the courtyard by coaxing the girl who was on duty. The very girl asked Peter, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" Peter replied, "I am not." Peter was the top disciple of Jesus. But he could not identify himself as Jesus' disciple, because of his seizure with fear. After his first denial, Peter mingled in with the people who were warming themselves around the fire. Peter's heart was perplexed, thinking of how he had denied his Master. But Jesus did not mind. Jesus understood him. After the resurrection, Jesus helped him out to the end--until he became the commander-in-chief in conquering the world with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (Jn 21:15).

Third, Jesus was tried by Annas first (18:12-23). The detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus like a criminal. They bound him and brought him first to Annas (12,13). Annas had been the official high priest once. Now Caiaphas, his son-in-law, was the high priest. The author abruptly introduces Caiaphas as the high priest, because he had been able to silence the turmoil of the crowd with a few words. He was a man of political intrigue (11:49,50). However, Annas was in control in an unofficial capacity behind his son-in-law Caiaphas (Lk 3:2; Ac 4:6). Look at verse 19. "Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching." Annas' question was intended to destroy Jesus' disciples, the future leaders of Jesus' movement. The reason he asked about Jesus' teaching was to find a basis to charge him with the crime of blasphemy.

Jesus did not answer Annas' question about his disciples and teaching. But Jesus did answer that he taught the truth in public. Look at verses 20-21. "'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. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.'" Jesus urges here that he taught the truth. In this case, the truth was the words of God. Even the blind beggar knew who Jesus was and cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mk 10:47) When Annas heard Jesus speak, inwardly he was bewildered by Jesus' spiritual power and authority. Then one of the officials, sensing that Annas the high priest was greatly alarmed, struck Jesus in the face (22). The flatterer was unworthy of a response from Jesus. But Jesus spoke to him like a friend, "If I said something wrong, testify as to what is wrong" (23). The man who struck Jesus in the face felt that his hand had completely shriveled. Clever Annas learned that Jesus' power and authority were

beyond his control. So he sent Jesus to Caiaphas, the high priest, who was younger and smarter (24). But Caiaphas was under the torment of the devil. To Jesus, this was the second trial. No one wants to be tried by a judge, not even by a traffic judge; but Jesus was tried again and again to obey God's will to save men from their sins.

Fourth, Peter's second and third denials (18:25-27). John loved Jesus. He was sorry that Peter denied Jesus three times consecutively. So John records them all. Look at verses 25-27. "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.' 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?' Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow"--to remind him of Jesus' words. Peter's fear problem had not been solved because he did not yet have resurrection faith. Once, he had made a confession of faith (Mt 16:16). Still, he did not have resurrection faith.

Fifth, Jesus was tried by Caiaphas (18:24,28). When we read the other gospels, we know that the trial before the Sanhedrin was conducted by Caiaphas. It lasted all night. During the time of trial, Jesus was mocked and beaten by them (Mt 26:57,67; 27:1). Then Caiaphas manipulated so that they sent Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor, to execute him, for the Jews had no authority to carry out the death penalty. In this way the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor.

Sixth, Jesus was tried by Pilate (18:28-40). Look at verse 28a. "Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor." These religious leaders wanted to dispose of Jesus quickly so that they could enjoy the weekend. They brought him to Pilate by any means because Jews had no power to execute people (31). The Jews were reluctant to enter the foreign governor's palace on the weekend, thinking that to enter a Gentile's palace would make them ceremonially unclean.

Pilate asked them, "What charges are you bringing against this man?" (29) When they could make no clear charge, he said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law" (31). However, Pilate could not resist the pressure of the Jews and went back inside the palace to question Jesus. Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" (34) Pilate wanted to keep his position as a Roman governor. He also wanted to get the Jews' support. Pilate wanted to be a good politician. He had a politician's psychology: Today's friend can be an enemy tomorrow. Still, John saw this event as the process of fulfilling God's will to save men from their sins (32). Pilate defended himself, saying, "Your people handed you over to me" (35). At this moment, what did Jesus do? Jesus talked about the kingdom of God to Pilate, in a way Pilate could understand. Verse 36 says, "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." Jesus is a good shepherd.

Pilate asked a question. Look at verse 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.'" Jesus wanted to invite Pilate to the kingdom of God. It was time for Pilate to accept Jesus' invitation. Jesus encouraged him to make a decision of faith to stand on the side of truth (37b). But Pilate did not budge. When Pilate heard Jesus' words, he exclaimed, "What is truth?" (38). His scream was the expression of his spiritual condition. In short, he did not know the truth: He did not know where he came from or where he was going back to. He did not know why he was existing or why he was killing so many colonial people.

Still, Pilate was compelled to rescue Jesus, partly because of his wife's message (Mt 27:19), and partly because of the truth in his heart. So he went out to make a political compromise with the Jews: "I find no basis for a charge against him. 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'?" They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" (38b-40) In addition, the Jews threatened Pilate, saying, "If you support a king of the Jews, you are no friend of Caesar!" (19:12b) When Pilate heard their shout, his heart sank. He was no more himself; he was beside himself. He knew that there was no basis for a charge against Jesus. But to save his own life, he gave up on saving Jesus.

Seventh, finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified (19:1-16a). Now Pilate was threatened by the Jews. He took Jesus and had him flogged, so as to entertain the hysteria of the Jews. Then his soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on Jesus' head. Being pricked by the thorns, blood flowed down from his forehead. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to mock him, saying, "Hail, O king of the Jews!" They struck him in the face again and again.

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." Pilate repeated the phrase, "I find no basis for a charge against him." But the godless and lawless religious leaders pretended as if they had not heard. When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" (4,5) Even though Pilate was a foreigner as a Roman governor, he earnestly wished that the Jews would be sympathetic toward the tortured Jesus. But they were merciless and murderous. They shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" (6) The crowd of people who were misled by the Jews were impervious to reason, and even to the claim of common humanity. The chief priests shouted, "We have no king but Caesar" (15). By saying this, they wanted to charge Jesus with rebellion against the Roman Emperor. In order to destroy Jesus, the Jews denied every principle they had, even their pride in being a chosen people.

And Pilate gave in to their claim when his position was threatened. "Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified" (16a). The Son of God had to be arrested and tried and sentenced to death because of our sins. Because of our sins, we are the ones who must be tried and condemned (2 Co 5:10). But our Messiah Jesus took upon himself all our iniquities and transgressions and was tried in our place (Isa 53:6). Later Peter said, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you

have been healed" (1 Pe 2:24).

Jesus was arrested, tried and condemned to death for our sins according to God's will for world salvation. When we believe these facts, God gives us new birth and eternal life and the kingdom of God.