

# EXPLANATION OF 43<sup>RD</sup> BIBLEBOOK

## JOHN 18 (A.D. 70-95)

### INTRODUCTION

John 18 to 19 deals with the suffering and death of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of Luke shows that Jesus was tried three times by the Jews, denied three times by Peter and tried three times by the Gentiles. John 18 relates a part of these trials. First, Jesus is arrested, tried before Annas and denied once by Peter. Then he is tried before Caiaphas and denied twice more by Peter. Finally he is tried before Pilate, before Herod and again before Pilate and then crucified. John chapter 19 relates this final trial before Pilate, his crucifixion and burial.

a. Four Gospel accounts. The four accounts in the four Gospels are the accounts of eye-witnesses. By comparing these accounts we get a clear picture of the events during his trial, death and resurrection. After his arrest by the soldiers, temple-police and Sanhedrin officials, Jesus was bound like a criminal. The One, who came into the world to bring freedom was bound, so that everyone who believes in him may be loosed from their sins!

b. Three trials before the Jews (**18:13-14,19-24,28a**). The Jewish authorities held two mock trials during Thursday night in order to gain time to gather the whole Sanhedrin (Jewish Council) together at the palace of the high priest. The first was a mock trial before Annas, the father-in-law of the high priest Caiaphas. The second was also a mock trial before the high priest Caiaphas. The third was the official trial before the Sanhedrin with Caiaphas presiding. John does not record the last two trials because the synoptic Gospels already did that.

c. Three denials by Peter (18:15-18,25-27). Three times during these trials before the Jews Peter denied Jesus. First, he denied Jesus before the doorkeeper, a maidservant, during the unofficial trial before Annas (18:15-18)<sup>1</sup>. Second, he denied Jesus before the same or another maidservant that replaced the first as doorkeeper and other bystanders shortly thereafter (18:25). Third, he denied Jesus before the bystanders who recognised his accent (18:26-27). The three synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John count the three denials of Peter differently.

d. Three trials before the Gentiles (18:28-40; 19:1-16a). The Roman authorities also held three trials early on Friday morning, because the Jews wanted to get Jesus executed as quickly as possible. The first trial was before the Roman governor, Pilate, in which Jesus was charged and investigated, but Jesus was declared innocent. The second trial was before king Herod, who had jurisdiction over Galilee, but also he found no ground for a death penalty. And the third trial was before Pilate again, in which Jesus was declared innocent, but nevertheless was martyred and condemned.

### OUTLINE

Title: The suffering of Jesus

(I) 18:1-12. Jesus arrested, yet in full control.

(Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:1-12)

- a. Jesus and his disciples in Gethsemane (18:1)
- b. Judas and his arresting team (18:2-3)
- c. Five signs that show that Jesus was in full control of the situation (18:4-12)
- d. The view of Jesus concerning violence (Matthew 26:52-53)

(II) 18:13 to 19:16a. Jesus was tried six times, yet was completely innocent.

**(1) The 1<sup>st</sup> trial** was unofficial, before the ex-high priest, Annas (John 18:13-13,19-23)

- a. The judge Annas (18:13-14)
- b. The first denial (18:15-18) (Matthew 26:69-70; Mark 14:66-68; Luke 22:54-57)
- c. The trial before Annas (18:19-21)
- d. Jesus mistreated (18:22-23)

**(2) The 2<sup>nd</sup> trial** was unofficial, before the sitting high priest, Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54,63-65; John 18:24)

- a. The judge Caiaphas (18:24)(Luke 22:54)
- b. The trial before Caiaphas (destroy temple, Christ is the Son of God, maltreatment)
- d. The second denial (18:25)(Matthew 26:71-72; Mark 14:69-70a; Luke 22:58)
- e. The third denial (18:26-27)(Matthew 26:73-75; Mark 14:70b-72; Luke 22:59-62)

**(3) The 3<sup>rd</sup> trial** was official, before the Jewish Council (Matthew 27:1; Mark 15:1a; Luke 22:66-71; John 18:28a)

- a. The Sanhedrin
- b. The trial before the Sanhedrin (decision, repeat Christ is the Son of God)

**(4) The 4<sup>th</sup> trial** was official, before the governor Pilate (Matthew 27:2,11-14; Mark 15:1b-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28b-38)

- a. Jesus charged (criminal: subverts the nation, opposes paying taxes, claims to be a king)  
(Pilate's first attempt to avoid making a decision by telling the Jews to try Jesus under Jewish law)
- b. Jesus investigated (king of Jews)
- c. Pilate's official verdict of the fourth trial (18:38; Luke 23:4).

**(5) The 5<sup>th</sup> trial** was official, before king Herod (Luke 23:6-12)

Pilate's second attempt to avoid making a decision by sending Jesus to Herod.

**(6) The 6<sup>th</sup> trial** was official, again before Pilate (Matthew 27:15-31; Mark 15:6-20; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-40; 19:1-16a). See John 19

(III) 18:28. The question about the Passover meal.

### EXPLANATION

**(I) 18:1-12. Jesus arrested, yet in full control.**

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 26:57-58,69-70; Mark 14:54,66-68; Luke 22:54-57

(Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:1-12)

**a. Jesus and his disciples in Gethsemane (18:1).**

**18:1.** When he had said (vpaa) these things, Jesus together with his disciples went out (viaa) across the winter-brook (wady) Kidron, where there was (viia) a garden, into which he and his disciples went (viia).

John 14:31 says that Jesus and his disciples stood up from the Passover meal. Apparently Jesus spoke about another ten minutes about the parable of the Vine and the branches<sup>2</sup>, the advantage of him leaving his disciples<sup>3</sup> and prayed the high priestly prayer<sup>4</sup> before they actually departed.

They left the city, crossed the Kidron valley and entered a garden. The Kidron valley was situated east of Jerusalem between the city and the Mount of Olives. Because water would only flow during the winter rains it was called 'a winter brook'. 'Kidron' probably means 'dark, gloomy' because it was the area in which idols and dead bodies were burned<sup>5</sup>.

In the other Gospels the garden was called 'Gethsemane', which means 'olive press'<sup>6</sup>. It is not possible to point out the exact location of this garden or grove today. John takes for granted that his readers are acquainted with the other three Gospels, which relate the struggle of Jesus when he was praying in Gethsemane<sup>7</sup>.

**b. Judas and his arresting team (18:2-3).**

**18:2.** Now also Judas, who was betraying (vpaa) him, knew (by relationship)<sup>8</sup> (vila) this place; for Jesus often met (was gathered) (viap) there with his disciples.

**18:3.** So Judas took (vpaa) the cohort (of soldiers) and servants (under rowers) from the chief priests and Pharisees, and went (vipn) there with torches and lanterns and weapons.

It is possible that Jesus and his disciples slept at this place the previous two nights (Tuesday and Wednesday night)<sup>9</sup>. All the disciples knew that Judas knew this place. While Judas was at the point of betraying Jesus, Jesus was at the point of giving his life deliberately and willingly for his sheep.

During the Jewish religious festivals many Jews from the surrounding countries came to Jerusalem and the patriotic feelings of Jews against the Roman occupier could run very high. At the north western corner of the temple area stood the fort Antonius. At the request of the chief priests (usually Sadducees) and the Pharisees, a cohort of soldiers with their commander was made available to arrest Jesus. A cohort normally consisted of 600 soldiers (a tenth of a legion), but the number also varied and is here probably a much smaller number<sup>10</sup>. It is practically certain that the Roman governor, Pilate, knew about this before Jesus was brought to trial before him<sup>11</sup>.

The Jewish Sanhedrin also sent the temple guards with these soldiers. Even a couple of chief priests and elders joined this crowd<sup>12</sup>! Their weapons consisted of the swords of the soldiers and the clubs of the temple guards<sup>13</sup>. It was full moon, but nevertheless they carried torches and lanterns to seek the Light of the world (8:12). They carried swords and clubs to arrest the Prince of Peace<sup>14</sup>! They regarded Jesus as a criminal<sup>15</sup> and Jesus regarded them as the rulers of darkness<sup>16</sup>.

His own disciples, the Jewish religious leaders and teachers and the Roman political and military authorities all contributed to enhance the suffering of Jesus.

**c. Five signs that show that Jesus was in full control of the situation (18:4-12).**

**(1) Jesus knew beforehand what was going to happen.**

**18:4a.** Then Jesus knowing (by relationship, reflection and intuition)<sup>17</sup> (vpaa) all that was going to happen (vppn) to him.

The first sign that Jesus was fully in control of the situation was that *he knew beforehand what was going to happen*.

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<sup>2</sup> John 15

<sup>3</sup> John 16

<sup>4</sup> John 17

<sup>5</sup> 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Kings 23:4; 2 Chronicles 29:16; 30:14; Jeremiah 31:40; cf. 2 Samuel 15:23

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 26:36; Mark 14:32

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46

<sup>8</sup> G: oida

<sup>9</sup> cf. Luke 21:37; 22:39

<sup>10</sup> cf. Matthew 27:62-66; Acts 21:31-32

<sup>11</sup> cf. Matthew 27:18-19

<sup>12</sup> cf. Luke 22:52

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 26:47

<sup>14</sup> Isaiah 9:5-6

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 26:55

<sup>16</sup> Luke 22:53

<sup>17</sup> G: oida

Jesus manifested himself as the Great Prophet, because he knew everything and revealed himself as the 'I AM' (8:24). Nothing is hidden from Jesus! He knows everything (1:42,47,48; 2:24-25; 5:6; 6:64; 13:1,3; 18:4; 21:17)<sup>18</sup>. While people never know what is going to happen in the future, Jesus Christ knew exactly what was going to happen to him.

## **(2) Jesus deliberately confronted his enemies.**

**18:4b.** came out (viaa) and said (vipa) to him, "For whom are you looking? (vipa)?"

The second sign that Jesus was fully in control of the situation, was that *he deliberately came out to his enemies*.

Jesus manifested himself as the Great King, because he took control of the situation, approached his enemies and confronted them with questions, while they shrunk back and fell to the ground. Jesus did not flee away from the danger. He also did not hide until they found him. Instead, he took the initiative and came out to them! The text does not say from where Jesus came out: a house, a cave or a garden. The most probable explanation is that Jesus came out of the relative darkness of the olive trees to a more open place in the olive grove (cf. 18:26) where the apprehensive crowd was standing with their torches and lanterns.

## **(3) The would-be captors of Jesus had no power against him.**

**18:5.** They answered (viao) him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said (vipa) to them, "I am (he)"<sup>19</sup> (vipa)." And Judas, the one who was betraying (vppa) him, was standing (vila) (there) with them.

**18:6.** As he then said (viaa) to them, "I am (he) (vipa)", they lurched (withdrew)(viaa) backward and fell (viaa) to the ground.

The third sign that Jesus was fully in control of the situation, was that *his would-be captors had no power against him!*

His would-be captors had gone out to arrest Jesus with force. But when Jesus voluntarily identified himself to them and said, "I am Jesus, the man from Nazareth", they lost their footing and fell backwards to the ground! They had not expected that Jesus would take matters into his own hands and come up to them! His authority as the King of kings that radiated from the look in his eyes and the tone in his voice made them weak in the knees!

When Jesus stood there right in front of his enemies, Judas embraced Jesus and kissed him, saying "Hail, Rabbi!"<sup>20</sup> This was the pre-arranged sign for the soldiers, temple-police and Sanhedrin officials to arrest Jesus. This was a very mean act, because Judas chose the most sacred night, that of the Passover, the most sacred place, the place where Jesus prayed, and the most sacred symbol, a kiss<sup>21</sup>, to betray his own Master! The kiss of Judas was even a ridiculous act, because when Jesus took the initiative to come out to his enemies and hand himself over to them, the sign was no longer a sign! But Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came for!"<sup>22</sup>.

## **(4) Jesus did not allow that one of his disciples to be captured with him.**

**18:7.** So he again requested of (viaa) them, "For whom are you looking (vipa)?" And they said (viaa), "Jesus the Nazarene."

**18:8.** Jesus answered (viao), "I told (viaa) you that I am (he)(vipa). Therefore if you are looking (vipa) for me, allow (vmaa) these men to go (vnpa)."

**18:9.** (This happened) in order that the word which he has spoken (viaa) might be fulfilled (vsap), "Of those whom you have given (vira) me, I have lost (viaa) none."

The fourth sign that Jesus was fully in control of the situation, was that *he did not allow one of his own disciples to be captured with him*.

When his would-be captors said that they had come to arrest Jesus, Jesus said, "If you are looking for me, then let these men go." Jesus manifested himself as the Great High Priest, because he pleaded for his own sheep. Judas did not belong to them, because he co-operated with the rulers of darkness. Twice his enemies had to repeat their commission: they had come to arrest Jesus. Thus from their own mouths they testified that the disciples of Jesus was not part of their mission. So, even in his greatest hour of suffering, Jesus was still the Good Shepherd, who cared for his own sheep. He did not want his disciples to be captured and tortured at this time, because this might have been too severe a test for their faith. By doing this, Jesus fulfilled another prophecy he had made several times before, "He had not lost one of those God the Father gave to him." (6:39; 10:28; 17:12). The words 'not go lost' refer to their spiritual welfare (they would receive eternal life), but in this location they also refer to their physical welfare (they would not be arrested and tried). If they would have been arrested and tried, it would have been too great a test of their faith. The disciples of Jesus were not yet ready to suffer and die for Jesus.

## **(5) Jesus was completely determined to lay down his life for his sheep.**

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<sup>18</sup> cf. Psalm 33:13-15; Hebrews 4:13

<sup>19</sup> G: egó eimi

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 26:49

<sup>21</sup> cf. Romans 16:16

<sup>22</sup> Matthew 26:49-50

**18:10.** Then Simon Peter, having (vppa) a short sword, drew (viaa) it and struck (viaa) the servant of the high priest and cut off (viaa) his right ear. Now the servant's name was (viia) Malchus.

**18:11.** Jesus however said (viaa) to Peter, "Place (vmaa) the sword in its sheath! The cup which the Father has given (vira) me, shall I not drink (vsaa) it?"

**18:12.** Then the cohort (of soldiers) and the commander (of 1000) and the servants (under-rowers) of the Jews seized (arrested)(viaa) Jesus and bound (viaa) him.

The fifth sign that Jesus was fully in control of the situation, was that *he was completely determined to lay down his life for his sheep.*

Peter, who was one of the disciples of Jesus, was always impulsive, drew his sword, struck a servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. Jesus immediately stopped Peter and ordered him to put away his sword. He said, "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" "Drinking the cup" was an expression for "undergoing the most bitter suffering and eternal death on the cross". Jesus was determined to drink the cup of suffering and death on the cross. He was determined to lay down his life for his sheep. He was determined to offer himself voluntarily. Peter's defence with a sword was at variance with the determination of Jesus!

Peter made no use of the freedom Jesus gave him to leave. Instead, he attacked with arrogance. The short sword was a kind of dagger which soldiers carried. The disciples had earlier said to Jesus that they had two swords, as if Jesus had been talking about the necessity of having and using weapons<sup>23</sup>! That is why Jesus gave them a curt and decisive reply, "Enough of this!" He silenced their talk about weapons, because that was not his way. The disciples had not understood his mission or what he meant<sup>24</sup>. John was an eye-witness, because he knew the high priest (18:15) and even the name of his servant. When the apostle John recorded this incident (after A.D. 70), the apostle Peter probably no longer lived. (He died about A.D. 68).

The prophecies in the Old Testament about his arrest<sup>25</sup> and crucifixion<sup>26</sup> had to go into fulfilment<sup>27</sup>. Jesus no longer asked God the Father to take this cup of suffering away from him<sup>28</sup>. This cup contained God's holy and righteous indignation (wrath) against the sin of the world<sup>29</sup>. Drinking this cup symbolised Christ's deliberate and willing submission to his suffering<sup>30</sup>. The Good Shepherd was on the point of laying down his life for his sheep (10:11).

The only One who can set people really free gave himself to be bound, so that all who are bound by sin may be set free if they believe (8:31-36).

At this point the disciples of Jesus abandoned Jesus and fled<sup>31</sup>. Also another young follower of Jesus (probably Mark) fled<sup>32</sup>.

#### d. The view of Jesus concerning violence (Matthew 26:52-53).

**Kingdoms that use violence are not of God.** Later Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingship (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 not from here" (18:36). Jesus made it very clear to the governments of this world that his kingship does not come through political intrigue or military power. His Kingdom is not like any kingdom in this world. Otherwise his followers would have fought with weapons like the people of darkness do. Jesus said, that if he wanted to, he could mobilise twelve legions (a legion is 6000) of angels to defend him<sup>33</sup>.

**People who take up the sword will die by the sword.** Jesus taught a very important truth about making use of evil force. "All who draw the sword will die by the sword"<sup>34</sup>! What you sow, you will reap<sup>35</sup>.

**Only the way of the cross leads to ultimate victory.** Submitting himself into the hands of his enemies was not a defeat, but his ultimate victory! None of the rulers of darkness understood God's wisdom, namely, that precisely by the death of Jesus Christ, he would become the Saviour of the world<sup>36</sup>!

Jesus Christ was not merely the *victim* of evil people. He was the King in complete control of whatever happened on earth. He was not merely *murdered*. He deliberately and voluntarily gave his life as a ransom for many people!

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<sup>23</sup> Matthew 26:50-54

<sup>24</sup> Luke 22:38

<sup>25</sup> Zachariah 13:7

<sup>26</sup> Psalm 22:16-18; Isaiah 53:5-6

<sup>27</sup> Matthew 26:54,56

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 26:39

<sup>29</sup> cf. Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15,29,31; Revelation 14:10; 16:19

<sup>30</sup> Mark 10:38-39

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50

<sup>32</sup> Mark 14:51-52

<sup>33</sup> Matthew 26:53

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 26:52

<sup>35</sup> Galatians 6:7-8

<sup>36</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:20 – 2:9

Jesus was in full control of everything that happened in his life on earth. He is also in full control of everything that happens in your and my life on earth!

## (II) 18:13 to 19:16a. Jesus was tried six times, yet was completely innocent.

The 1<sup>st</sup> trial was unofficial, before the ex-high priest, Annas.  
(John 18:13-13,19-23)

### a. The judge Annas (18:13-14).

**18:13.** and they led (viaa) him to Annas first, for he was (viia) father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was (viia) high priest of that year.

**18:14.** Now Caiaphas was (viia) the one who had advised (vpaa) the Jews that it was expedient (advantageous)(vipa) that one man die (vnaa) for (in the place of) the people (the nation) (11:49-50).

Annas was high priest from A.D. 6-15. Although he was deposed, he remained the dominant member of the Sanhedrin, which controlled all Jewish affairs. He managed to get his son-in-law, Caiaphas, as well as five of his own sons and a grandson to be appointed high priest! After a high priest stepped down he retained his high priestly status. Everyone still called him a 'high priest'<sup>37</sup>. His whole family belonged to the party of the Sadducees<sup>38</sup>. Although the sitting high priest always functioned as the chairman of the Jewish Council (Sanhedrin) (cf. 11:47), Annas was surely the man to consult! He was the man largely responsible for the actions of the Jewish Council. Other historical sources describe Annas as a proud, exceedingly ambitious and very wealthy man. His family was notorious for its greed. The main source of his wealth came from receiving a good share of the profits made by selling sacrificial animals in the temple court. He was responsible for turning God's house of prayer into a den of robbers (2:14). He might have been the instigator behind the plot to kill Jesus.

Anyway, his son-in-law Caiaphas propagated that it would be to the great advantage of the Jewish nation if Jesus was killed. Jesus was first examined by Annas (18:19-23), because only after that he was sent to Caiaphas (18:24).

### b. The first denial (Matthew 26:69-70; Mark 14:66-68; Luke 22:54-57; John 18:15-18).

**18:15.** Now Simon Peter was following (viia) Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was (viia) known to the high priest of that year and he entered (viaa) with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest.

**18:16.** But Peter remained standing (vila) outside in front of the gate. So the other disciple, the one known to the high priest, came out (viaa) and spoke (viaa) to the doorkeeper and brought (viaa) Peter in.

**18:17.** Then the girl who kept the gate said (vipa) to Peter, "Are (vipa) you not one of the disciples of that man?" He said (vipa) to her, "I am (vipa) not."

**18:18.** Now the slaves and servants (under rowers) had made (vpaa) a charcoal fire, because it was (viia) cold, and they were standing (vpaa) warming (viin) themselves. And also Peter was (viia) with them, standing (vpaa) and warming himself (vppn).

According to all four Gospels the first denial of Peter was before a servant girl<sup>39</sup>. After Peter's first denial, the cock had crowed the first time<sup>40</sup>.

By comparing Matthew 26:57,59 with John 18:13,15,24 we conclude that the palace was a large building with many rooms built around an open courtyard, so that Annas occupied one wing of the palace and Caiaphas the other.

### c. The trial before Annas (18:19-21).

**18:19.** Then the (former) high priest (Annas) questioned (viaa) Jesus concerning his disciples and concerning his teaching.

**18:20.** Jesus answered (viaa) him, "I have spoken (vira) openly to the world. I always taught at synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews come together (i.e. are in the habit of congregating)(vipn); and in secret I said (viaa) nothing.

**18:21.** Why are you questioning (vipa) me? Question (vmaa) those who heard (vpaa) what I said (viaa) to them. Look, they know (by reflection)<sup>41</sup> (vira) what I said (viaa).

With the title 'high priest' (18:19) probably Annas is meant (18:24). Annas questioned Jesus first about his disciples and then about his teaching. Thus he was more interested in the success of Jesus than in the truth. He was not interested to render justice to Jesus.

The 'world' is a reference to the public at large (1:9-10; 7:4; 14:22). Jesus said that he had always spoken openly and everybody had been welcome to hear his teachings. This stood in stark contrast to the secret plotting by the Jews! The people who acknowledged the truth and believed in him became his disciples.

Although there were some non-Jews among his hearers<sup>42</sup>, Jesus especially spoke to the Jews<sup>43</sup>. The Jewish law does not compel a person to testify against himself and so Jesus declined to witness against himself.

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<sup>37</sup> cf. Luke 3:2; Acts 4:6

<sup>38</sup> Acts 5:17

<sup>39</sup> Matthew 26:69-70; Mark 14:66-68; Luke 22:54-57; John 18:17

<sup>40</sup> Mark 14:68

<sup>41</sup> G: oida

<sup>42</sup> Matthew 15:21-28; Luke 7:1-10

<sup>43</sup> Matthew 10:5-6

He demanded that Annas produce honest witnesses, just as the Old Testament law required<sup>44</sup>. Annas had to question those who heard what he taught in public.

#### **d. Jesus mistreated (18:22-23).**

**18:22.** Now when he had said (vpaa) these things, one of the servants (under rowers) standing by (vpra) gave (viaa) Jesus a blow (in the face) and said, “Is this the way you answer (vipn) the high priest?”

**18:23.** Jesus answered (viao) him, “If I spoke (viaa) wrongly, testify (vmaa) with reference to the wrong, but if rightly, why do you strike (beat)(vipa) me?” .

The blow may be with a stick (club, rod) or whip<sup>45</sup>, but is probably a slap in the face with the flat hand<sup>46</sup>. Jesus could not fend for himself, because he was handcuffed. He was beaten before he was found guilty. This is the practice of all torturers. May be this servant wanted to make an impression on the high priest, but forgot that he was acting against the heavenly High Priest! Jesus was not only innocent, but also holy and almighty!

Jesus did not overcome evil by doing evil. He remained dignified throughout his trial. Even if he would have answered as Paul did in a similar situation<sup>47</sup>, he would still not have been guilty, because the high priest had not commanded this servant to beat Jesus. An accusation had to be proved first before the accused was declared ‘guilty’. And of course the witnesses had to be trustworthy.

No incriminating evidence was produced at this first preliminary hearing. Jesus was *completely innocent!* Nevertheless, Annas sent Jesus across the courtyard to Caiaphas.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> second trial was unofficial, before the sitting high priest, Caiaphas.  
(Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54,63-65; John 18:24)

#### **a. The judge Caiaphas (Luke 22:54; John 18:24).**

**18:24.** Then Annas sent (viaa) him bound (vprp) to Caiaphas, the highpriest.

The second trial also took place in the high priest’s house<sup>48</sup>. It took place in the presence of the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law (thus, all members of the Jewish Council). It is clear that this trial was not official. It was a plot to remove Jesus from the scene. Jesus had openly exposed and condemned the Jewish religious leaders and teachers<sup>49</sup>. They were jealous of his influence on the people of the nation and they resented the fact that they had lost their grip on the people<sup>50</sup>. The trial took place in the night and before false witnesses, because they wanted to get Jesus executed<sup>51</sup>. But Jesus did not defend himself against these false witnesses, because he was busy laying down his life freely and in the place of sinners<sup>52</sup>.

Caiaphas (11:49-52; 18:13-14,24) was high priest from A.D. 18-36. He was the son-in-law of Annas. He was a sly and cunning leader who knew how to get what he wanted. It had already been decided before that Jesus should die (11:53)<sup>53</sup>. The question was only how to accomplish this<sup>54</sup>. The purpose of the religious leaders and teachers of the Jews was only to find the slightest reason that had the appearance of justice to condemn Jesus guilty of the death sentence before the Roman governor.

#### **b. The trial before Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65).**

The Jewish Council with Caiaphas as chairman brought in false witnesses to testify against Jesus in order to force Jesus to say something they could use to pronounce the death sentence. However, their testimonies did not agree. Jesus saw right through their plan and remained silent<sup>55</sup>.

Finally Caiaphas compelled Jesus to answer under oath whether he was the Messiah, the Son of God. If Jesus acknowledged this as the truth, he would be guilty of blasphemy and the death sentence (by stoning). But if he remained silent his influence under the people would come to an end. Caiaphas asked, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” Jesus answered, “I AM. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Without realising it himself, Caiaphas was forced to ask this question, so that all people in all the coming centuries would know that Jesus very clearly said that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, and they would know why he was condemned<sup>56</sup>. Note, it was Jesus Himself who declared that he was the Son of God!

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<sup>44</sup> Deuteronomy 17:6

<sup>45</sup> Micah 4:14

<sup>46</sup> cf. Isaiah 50:6

<sup>47</sup> Acts 23:2-5

<sup>48</sup> Luke 22:54

<sup>49</sup> Matthew 23

<sup>50</sup> Mark 15:10

<sup>51</sup> Matthew 26:59-60

<sup>52</sup> Mark 15:3-5

<sup>53</sup> Matthew 26:3-4

<sup>54</sup> Luke 22:2

<sup>55</sup> Mark 14:55-61a

<sup>56</sup> Mark 14:61b-65; cf. Acts 4:27-28

Feigning horror, Caiaphas tore his clothes, which God had forbidden him to do<sup>57</sup>. Without realising it himself he condemned himself to removal from the high priesthood (cf. 11:49-52). Now that the true High Priest, Jesus Christ, was on the point of sacrificing himself as the atonement for sins, the priesthood according to Aaron would be terminated<sup>58</sup>! The Old Testament covenant had shortcomings<sup>59</sup>. It was set aside, because it was useless to make anything perfect<sup>60</sup>. Israel had broken the covenant<sup>61</sup>, but Jesus Christ had fulfilled the covenant<sup>62</sup>!

No incriminating evidence was produced at this second preliminary hearing. Jesus was *completely innocent*!

### **c. Jesus mistreated (Luke 22:63-64).**

Nevertheless, Caiaphas and the Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy, spat in his face and struck him with their fists!

This trial must have ended about 3 a.m. in the morning, because the rooster crowed. Meanwhile, the men, who guarded Jesus, mocked and insulted him and beat him<sup>63</sup>. Jesus was kept imprisoned in the high priest's house until early morning.

### **d. The second denial (Matthew 26:71-72; Mark 14:69-70a; Luke 22:58; John 18:25).**

**18:25.** Now Simon Peter was standing (vpra) warming himself (+vppn). So they said (viaa) to him. "Are (vipa) you not one of his disciples?" He denied (viad) it and said (viaa), "I am (vipa) not."

This was a denial before a group of bystanders ('they'). According to the three synoptic Gospels the second denial was before the same servant girl or another servant girl who came to replace her as the gate keeper. She said, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." But he denied it with an oath, "I don't know the man"<sup>64</sup>. Peter had probably tried to leave the court, but did not get further than the gate. The Gospel of John does not count this as the second denial.

According to the three synoptic Gospels the third denial was before a group of bystanders and happened about an hour later<sup>65</sup>, "Surely you are one of them, for your (Galilean) accent gives you away." But Peter called down curses on himself and swore to them, "I don't know that man"<sup>66</sup>. According to the Gospel of John this denial before a group of bystanders was the second denial.

### **e. The third denial (Matthew 26:73-75; Mark 14:70b-72; Luke 22:59-62; John 18:26-27).**

**18:26.** One of the servants of the high priest, being (vppa) a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off (viaa), said (vipa), "Did I not see (viaa) you in the garden with him?"

**18:27.** However, Peter again denied (viad) and immediately the rooster crowed (viaa).

The synoptic Gospels do not mention this denial. According to the Gospel of John this was the third denial. It was an event simultaneous with the second denial, when bystanders standing around the fire pointed out that his Galilean accent betrayed his association with Jesus. Several bystanders spoke to Peter or about Peter, but he kept on denying his association with Jesus Christ. One of the bystanders was a relative of Malchus and had actually seen Peter in the olive grove. But Peter denied every association with Jesus.

John was probably an acquaintance of the high priest, the slave of the high priest and the gatekeepers. After Peter's third denial, the rooster crowed a second time and Peter realised that Jesus had turned around and looked straight at him. Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him the evening before (13:38)<sup>67</sup>. He left and cried bitterly.

Peter did not really know himself. The evening before he made a big statement and said to Jesus, "I am ready to go with you to prison and to death"; "I will lay down my life for you" (13:37)<sup>68</sup>. And Jesus had warned him. "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times" (13:38)!" But that same night, when Jesus was arrested, he deserted Jesus and fled together with the other disciples<sup>69</sup>! And finally he denied Jesus three times.

Peter did not want to deny Jesus, but Peter did not realise that he too *had feelings of fear*. He did not realise that in his own power he could not keep his big promise. Only the realisation of his own weakness and emptiness prepared him to later receive the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, we must think of the big promises we have made to the Lord? Which big aspirations have we had with regard to God's kingdom? Do we really know ourselves? Do we

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<sup>57</sup> Leviticus 21:10; 10:6

<sup>58</sup> cf. Hebrews 7:11-12

<sup>59</sup> Hebrews 8:7

<sup>60</sup> Hebrews 7:18-19

<sup>61</sup> Hebrews 8:9

<sup>62</sup> Hebrews 7:21-28; 8:1-6

<sup>63</sup> Luke 22:63-65

<sup>64</sup> Matthew 26:71-72; Mark 14:69-70a; cf. Luke 22:58

<sup>65</sup> Luke 22:59

<sup>66</sup> Matthew 26:73-75; Mark 14:70b-72; Luke 22:59-62

<sup>67</sup> Mark 14:72

<sup>68</sup> Luke 22:33

<sup>69</sup> Mark 14:50

realise just how weak we are? Are we willing to tell this to Jesus? We know that we can also deny Jesus. So we need to pray for his grace and the power of his Holy Spirit, that we would never deny him, but instead confess him at all times and under all conditions.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> trial was official, before the Jewish Council.  
(Matthew 27:1; Mark 15:1a; Luke 22:66-71; John 18:28a)

The third trial took place just after day-break (on Friday the 15<sup>th</sup> Nisan)<sup>70</sup>.

#### a. The Sanhedrin.

The Jewish Council (Sanhedrin) was the highest Jewish government and court. It convened a hurried official meeting to ratify their decision that Jesus was guilty of the death sentence. The Jewish leaders wanted everything to be over before the multitudes in Jerusalem would become aware of what was happening and before the Sabbath started that Friday evening. They wanted to give a semblance of legality to the corrupt proceedings that had marked the night sessions.

#### b. The trial before the Sanhedrin.

At the second trial *the high priest* charged Jesus under oath to say whether he was the Messiah (the Christ), the Son of God and Jesus answered, “Yes, it is as you say. But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven”<sup>71</sup>.

At the third trial *the chief priests and teachers of the law* questioned Jesus, “If you are the Messiah (the Christ), tell us.” Jesus replied, “If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.” They all asked, “Are you then the Son of God?” He replied, “You are right in saying I AM.” Then they said, “Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips”<sup>72</sup>.

‘Son of God’ means that God took on the human nature in Jesus Christ and came to live among mankind (1:1,14). It means that Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God<sup>73</sup>, the visible radiance of God’s invisible but glorious attributes and the exact visible representation of God’s invisible being<sup>74</sup>. The religious leaders and teachers of the Jews unanimously pronounced Jesus guilty and sentenced him to death<sup>75</sup>.

But also the official Jewish council could not find any incriminating evidence against Jesus. Jesus was *completely innocent!* Although the Jewish Council had the right to pronounce the death sentence, they had no right to execute the death penalty. Therefore they took Jesus to the Roman governor, Pilate in order to get him executed.

The 4<sup>th</sup> trial was official, before the governor Pilate.  
(Matthew 27:2,11-14; Mark 15:1b-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28b-38)

#### a. Jesus charged (Matthew 27:12-14; Mark 15:3; Luke 23:1-2; **John 18:28-32**).

**18:28.** Then they led (vipa) Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium (the official residence of the governor, Pilate). It was (viia) early in the morning<sup>76</sup>. They (the chief priests and elders who were Sadducees) themselves did not enter (viaa) the Praetorium, in order that they might not defile themselves (vsap), but might eat (vsaa) the Passover.

**18:29.** So Pilate came out (viaa) to them and said (vipa), “What charge (accusation) are you bringing (vipa) against this man?”

**18:30.** They answered (viao) and said (viaa) to him, “If this man were (viia) not an evildoer (+vppa), we would not have handed him over (viaa) to you.”

**18:31.** Pilate said (viaa) to them, “Take (vmaa) him yourselves and judge (vmaa) him in accordance with your own law.” But the Jews said (viaa) to him, “It is not lawful<sup>77</sup> (vipa) for us to kill (execute)(vnaa) anyone.”

**18:32.** (This happened) in order that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled (vsap), which he had spoken (viaa)<sup>78</sup>, signifying (vppa) by what (kind of) death he was about (viia) to die (+vnpa) (not by Jewish method of stoning, but by Roman method of crucifixion).

#### The question about the Passover.

(See III).

#### b. The judge Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea (19:28).

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<sup>70</sup> Luke 22:66

<sup>71</sup> Matthew 26:63-64

<sup>72</sup> Luke 22:66-71

<sup>73</sup> Colossians 1:15

<sup>74</sup> Hebrews 1:3

<sup>75</sup> Mark 14:64

<sup>76</sup> G: prói

<sup>77</sup> G: exestin

<sup>78</sup> Mark 10:33-34

The Roman Empire ruled over Palestine. Pontius Pilate was the fifth governor or procurator of Judea. A procurator ruled over a province in the Roman empire which fell directly under the supervision of the Caesar. Although Pilate had civil, judicial and military authority over his province, he stood under the authority of the legate of Syria.

Pilate was arrogant and proud (19:10), cruel<sup>79</sup> and probably as superstitious as his wife (19:8)<sup>80</sup>. He was afraid to lose his good standing with the Roman emperor and that the Jews would use their influence to remove him from office. He was selfish, seeking to maintain his own power even at the cost of the life of an innocent person. He was unjust, because although he knew that Jesus was completely innocent, he still had him crucified!

During the trial, everything pointed in the direction that he wanted to get rid of this case.

#### **c. The charges (18:29-30; Matthew 27:12-14; Luke 23:2).**

John takes for granted that his readers are acquainted with the three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). The religious leaders and teachers of the Jews accused Jesus of being an evildoer and criminal. They produced three accusations against Jesus.

- They accused Jesus of subverting the Jewish nation<sup>81</sup>.
- They accused Jesus of opposing the paying of taxes to Caesar<sup>82</sup>.
- They accused Jesus of claiming that he was a king, thus threatening the position of Caesar<sup>83</sup>.

Thus, they charged Jesus being a dangerous political opponent and traitor. But Jesus made no reply to their false accusations<sup>84</sup>! The Jews maintained that they had 'found' these charges after thorough investigation. But they lied! Pilate knew that the Jewish religious leaders and teachers had handed Jesus over to be killed, because they were jealous of his influence in the nation<sup>85</sup>.

#### **d. The penalty (18:31).**

This is Pilate's first attempt to evade his responsibility to try Jesus by telling the Jews to try Jesus themselves according to their own law. Although the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Council) had jurisdiction to judge cases with regard to the Jewish religion and even pronounce the death sentence, they had no right to execute the death penalty. That remained the prerogative of the Roman authority. So the Jews charged Jesus with being a very dangerous criminal, a threat against the Roman government and they demanded that he be executed by crucifixion (18:28-32). The charge of the Jewish religious leaders and teachers was a veiled threat to Pilate not to come to another conclusion and judgement than theirs. They were determined to kill Jesus. The Jews knew that the Jewish law decreed death by stoning for a blasphemer<sup>86</sup> and in the case of Stephen the Jews took matters into their own hands and stoned him<sup>87</sup>! Nevertheless, in the case of Jesus they wanted him to be executed in the Roman way, that is, by crucifixion. They did not want to risk the possibility that the Roman authorities blocked their execution of Jesus by stoning him. They definitely wanted to get rid of him<sup>88</sup>.

#### **e. The kind of death Jesus would die (18:32).**

Jesus had often prophesied about the kind of death he was going to die (18:32): he would be betrayed into the hands of men<sup>89</sup>; the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law (the Jewish Sanhedrin) would reject him<sup>90</sup>; he would be handed over to the Gentiles (Romans) who would spit on him, flog him and kill him, but three days later he would rise from the dead<sup>91</sup>; he would not be killed in the Jewish way by stoning, but in the Roman way by crucifixion, because he would be lifted up (on a cross) like Moses lifted up the bronze snake in the desert<sup>92</sup>.

The prophecies of Jesus went into fulfilment. The Jews demanded that Jesus be crucified (19:6,15-16), but they had no idea that about a thousand years earlier David had already prophesied that Jesus would die by crucifixion<sup>93</sup> and about seven hundred years before Isaiah had prophesied that Jesus would die by crucifixion<sup>94</sup>. The words of the prophets and of Jesus would literally go into fulfilment! Jesus willingly submitted to be crucified (10:17-18) for a completely different reason, namely, as a sacrifice of atonement for sins (1:29; 3:14) and in order to draw people from all nations to himself (12:31-32)! Everyone who did not keep the law completely was accursed. Because no

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<sup>79</sup> Lucas 13:1

<sup>80</sup> Matthew 27:19

<sup>81</sup> but cf. Matthew 10:5-6

<sup>82</sup> but cf. Luke 20:25

<sup>83</sup> but cf. John 6:15

<sup>84</sup> Matthew 27:12-14

<sup>85</sup> Matthew 27:18

<sup>86</sup> Leviticus 24:14,16

<sup>87</sup> Acts 7

<sup>88</sup> cf. Matthew 12:14

<sup>89</sup> Mark 9:31

<sup>90</sup> Mark 8:31

<sup>91</sup> Mark 10:33-34

<sup>92</sup> John 3:14; 12:32-33

<sup>93</sup> Psalm 22:17

<sup>94</sup> Isaiah 53:5-6

one can keep the law, every human being is accursed<sup>95</sup>. Also someone hanging on a tree (the cross) was regarded as accursed<sup>96</sup>. Because Jesus was crucified he carried the curse in the place of everyone who believes in him<sup>97</sup>. He bears their sins in his own body on the tree (the cross)<sup>98</sup>!

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<sup>95</sup> Galatians 3:10-11

<sup>96</sup> Deuteronomy 21:23

<sup>97</sup> Galatians 3:10-13

<sup>98</sup> 1 Peter 2:24

f. Pilate privately questioned Jesus about his kingship (kingdom)  
(Matthew 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3-5; John 18:33-38a).

**18:33.** Then Pilate again entered (viaa) the Praetorium, and he summoned (viaa) Jesus and said (viaa) to him, “Are (vipa) you the king of the Jews?”<sup>99</sup>

**18:34.** Jesus answered (viao), “Do you say this of yourself (i.e. on your own accord), or have others said (viaa) (it) to you about me?”

**18:35.** Pilate answered (viao), “Surely I am (vipa) not a Jew, (am I)? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over (viaa) to me. What have you done (viaa)?”

**18:36.** Jesus answered (viao), “My kingship (kingdom)<sup>100</sup> is (vipa) not of this world. If my kingdom were (viaa) of this world, my servants (under rowers) would have been fighting (viin) in order not to hand (me) over (vsap) to the Jews. But now my kingship (kingdom) is (vipa) not from here.

**18:37.** Then Pilate said (viaa) to him. “So then<sup>101</sup> you are (vipa) a king.” Jesus answered (viao), “You are saying (vipa) that I am (vipa) a king. For this (purpose)<sup>102</sup> I was born (virp) and for this (reason) I came (vira) into the world, in order that I might testify (vsaa) to the truth. Whoever is (vppa) of the truth, listens (vipa) to my voice.

**18:38.** Pilate said (vipa) to him, “What is (vipa) truth?”

And having said (vpaa) this, he went out (viaa) to the Jews again, and said (vipa) to them, “No charge (ground for complaint)<sup>103</sup> whatever do I find (vipa) in him.

When Pilate heard the third charge against Jesus, namely, that he claimed to be a king, he went into his residence and summoned Jesus to him. He asked Jesus whether he was the king of the Jews. But before answering, Jesus first wanted to know with what motive Pilate had asked this question. If Pilate’s concept of his kingship was that of the Jews, he would have to answer ‘No’, because he was not a political or military king as the Jews expected. But if Pilate’s question was sincere, he would answer ‘Yes’, because he was the real king of the Jews<sup>104</sup> and the king of many more people<sup>105</sup>!

Pilate answered with disdain that he was not a Jew and thus did not believe like the Jews. Then Jesus explained to him that he was a king, but not like the kings in the world. He came from heaven, not to fight against nations for political and military power. He came to testify for the truth and to destroy the realm of lies. Instead of commanding his servants to fight, Jesus commanded them to put their swords away (18:10-11)<sup>106</sup>. He did not acquire kingship by a coupe, but was born a king. His kingship was not over countries, but a kingship in the hearts and lives of people who listen to his voice (18:37).

Pilate said, “So you are then a king.” Pilate could not imagine that a person could speak about his kingship without actually reigning over some kingdom on earth. Jesus replied, “You’re telling me!” This answer is a very strong affirmative. This was why Jesus was born on earth. He had taken on the human nature and had entered his creation and human history to reveal the truth about God and man and the truth about salvation and judgement to people (cf. 3:11,32; 8:28,38; 12:49; 14:10; 17:8). Everyone who belongs to this truth (cf. 14:6) listens to his voice. Jesus even gently invited the governor, Pilate, to come to the side of truth. He said, “Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (18:37).

However, Pilate (cf. 19:7-12) and his family<sup>107</sup> did not belong to this truth. They lived in superstition and in fear. So Pilate remarked sceptically and cynically, “What is truth?” Pilate was blind with respect to the truth, even with respect to the Truth that stood before him (14:6).

g. Pilate’s official verdict of the fourth trial (18:38b; Luke 23:4).

Pilate again went out to the Jews and rendered his verdict. “I find no basis for a charge against this man”<sup>108</sup>. The judge’s official verdict was that Jesus was completely innocent! If Pilate had been a righteous man, he would have released Jesus at this point. But the Jewish leaders immediately accused Jesus of continuously stirring people up in Galilee and all over Judea<sup>109</sup>. Although Pilate had full jurisdiction over Judea, he sent Jesus to king Herod, who had jurisdiction over Galilee<sup>110</sup>.

The 5<sup>th</sup> trial was official, before king Herod.  
(Luke 23:6-12)

The fifth trial happened between Matthew 27:14 and 27:15; Mark 15:5 and 15:6; John 18:38 and 18:39.

<sup>99</sup> Matthew 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3

<sup>100</sup> G: basileia

<sup>101</sup> G: oukoun

<sup>102</sup> G: eis touto

<sup>103</sup> G: aitia

<sup>104</sup> cf. Isaiah 9:5-6; Ezekiel 37:24

<sup>105</sup> Matthew 28:18; Revelation 1:5; 19:16

<sup>106</sup> Matthew 26:52-54

<sup>107</sup> Matthew 27:19

<sup>108</sup> Luke 23:4

<sup>109</sup> Luke 23:5

<sup>110</sup> Luke 23:7-8

This is Pilate's second attempt to evade his responsibility to try and sentence Jesus by sending Jesus to king Herod, who had jurisdiction over Galilee<sup>111</sup>. At that moment Herod resided in Jerusalem<sup>112</sup>.

In spite of the fact that Herod questioned Jesus and the Jewish leaders brought serious accusations against Jesus, he gave not a single answer<sup>113</sup>. Even king Herod could not find any cause of indictment. Jesus was *completely innocent!*

Nevertheless, he and his soldiers mocked Jesus, dressed him in an elegant robe and sent him back to Pilate. On that day Herod and Pilate, who were former enemies, became friends<sup>114</sup>.

The 6<sup>th</sup> trial was official, again before Pilate.  
(Matthew 27:15-31; Mark 15:6-20; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-40; 19:1-16a)

a. Pilate's official verdict of the fifth trial (Luke 23:13-16; cf. John 18:38).

Pilate summoned the Jewish leaders and said that after he had examined Jesus in their presence, he had found no basis for any charge against Jesus. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back. *Jesus had done nothing that deserved the death sentence.* But because Pilate feared an uprising of the Jews he wanted to appease them by saying that he would give Jesus a flogging with a whip and then release him<sup>115</sup>.

b. Pilate's third attempt to avoid making a decision by proposing to release a criminal, Barabbas  
(Matthew 27:15-18,20-21; Mark 15:6-11; Luke 23:18-19; John 18:39-40).

**18:39.** There is (vipa) a custom for you that I release (vsaa) one (prisoner) for you during the Passover. "Do do you wish (vipn) that I release (vsaa) for you the king of the Jews?"

**18:40.** Then they began to shout (viaa), saying (vppa), "Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was (viiia) a robber.

Pilate had the custom every Passover to release one condemned prisoner to the Jews at their request. Pilate let them choose between Jesus, the king of the Jews, and Barabbas, a notorious rebel and murderer. After his triumphant entry into Jerusalem the previous Sunday, it could be expected that the crowd of Jews would request the release of Jesus. Why would the crowd turn against their own Messiah? Pilate knew he was setting the Jews up against their own leaders. If the crowd chose Jesus, Pilate would not have to condemn him. Then Pilate would have scored a victory against the Jewish leaders. Pilate mixed his request with a dose of ridicule: By calling Jesus 'the king of the Jews' instead of saying that 'he claimed to be the king of the Jews' Pilate aroused even more the anger of the Jewish leaders.

At that critical moment, a messenger arrived to inform Pilate about a dream which had caused intense suffering to his wife. It was then that the Jewish leaders stirred up the whole crowd to demand the release of Barabbas and to have Jesus crucified.

**(III) 18:28. The question about the Passover meal.**

a. The question about the day of eating the last Passover (meal).

The Jewish day begins and ends at sunset, about 18.00 hours. So a Jewish day begins with the evening and is followed by the night, the morning and the afternoon. Some Christians ask the question: "Was the last Passover meal eaten on Thursday evening (15<sup>th</sup> Nisan) *before* Jesus was crucified on Friday morning (15<sup>th</sup> Nisan) as the Synoptic Gospels<sup>116</sup> teach or was the last Passover meal eaten on Friday evening (16<sup>th</sup> Nisan) *after* Jesus was crucified as the Gospel of John 18:28 seems to imply? They say that there seems to be a contradiction between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John and that either John is wrong or the Synoptic Gospels are wrong.

Other Christians, including this explanation of the Gospel of John, say that the four Gospels do NOT contradict each other and that therefore all four Gospels teach that the Passover *meal* was celebrated by all Jews, including Jesus and his disciples, at *the regular time on Thursday evening the 15<sup>th</sup> Nisan* and that there is a good explanation for the word 'feast' in John 13:29 (see John chapter 13:1) and a good explanation for "eating the Passover" in John 18:28.

b. A popular explanation of John 18:28 must be rejected.

The Old Testament ceremonial law teaches that no one may do any work on the Sabbath<sup>117</sup>. The Jewish Sabbath day began at dusk (about 18.00 hours) on Friday and ended at dusk (about 18.00 hours) on Saturday.

People who assume that John was right say that in that year the eating of the Passover meal fell on a Sabbath! Thus they assume that the Passover lamb was slaughtered on Friday (15<sup>th</sup> Nisan) late in the afternoon, which is the day before the Sabbath, and the Passover meal was eaten on Friday (16<sup>th</sup> Nisan) in the evening, which is the Sabbath!

This caused a problem for the Pharisees, because they did not want to defile the Sabbath (Friday evening 16<sup>th</sup> Nisan) by the extended Passover ritual. *In order to strictly adhere to the Sabbath rules*, the Pharisees and most of the Jews, including Jesus and his disciples, celebrated the Passover meal one day earlier.

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<sup>111</sup> Luke 23:6-12

<sup>112</sup> Luke 23:6-7

<sup>113</sup> Luke 23:8-10

<sup>114</sup> Luke 23:11-12

<sup>115</sup> Luke 23:16

<sup>116</sup> Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12,14; Luke 22:11,14,15

<sup>117</sup> Leviticus 23:3

They slaughtered the Passover lamb on Thursday (14<sup>th</sup> Nisan) late in the afternoon<sup>118</sup> and ate the Passover meal on Thursday (15<sup>th</sup> Nisan) in the evening instead of on the Sabbath, Friday evening (16<sup>th</sup> Nisan).

The fact that the Passover fell on a Sabbath was, however, no problem for the Sadducees, because they did not adhere to the strict purification laws of the Pharisees. They celebrated the Passover meal on the Sabbath, Friday evening (16<sup>th</sup> Nisan)(18:28). *Conclusion of this explanation is that the Passover meal was celebrated on two consecutive evenings among the Jews: the Pharisees and most of the Jews celebrated the Passover on Thursday (15<sup>th</sup> Nisan) and the Sadducees celebrated the Passover on Friday (16<sup>th</sup> Nisan).*

This explanation must be rejected. The Jews were fully aware that the ceremonial law stipulated *one* particular day for slaughtering of the lambs, namely, on the 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan late in the afternoon<sup>119</sup>. Two separate days for slaughtering the lambs would have caused great confusion and the Sadducees, who regulated the affairs at the temple, would certainly not have permitted it.

### c. The biblical date for the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread.

**The Passover is an appointed feast.** The Old Testament ceremonial law teaches the following about the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread<sup>120</sup>.

Various *preparations* had to be made for the Passover meal on 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan: the room had to be obtained and arranged, purchases of unleavened bread, herbs and a lamb had to be made, the sauce had to be prepared and the lamb had to be slaughtered late in the afternoon that ends 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan<sup>121</sup>. In Matthew 26:17 and Luke 22:7 “the day of (the Feast of) Unleavened Bread is used in its broadest sense: it included the preparations made on 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan. These preparations were made on Thursday (14<sup>th</sup> Nisan) during the day time.

The actual Feast of Unleavened Bread was celebrated from 15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Nisan. The actual Passover *meal* was eaten on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, that is, at the regular time on Thursday evening the 15<sup>th</sup> Nisan<sup>122</sup>.

**The day of Preparation was not for the Passover (19:14).** ‘The day of Preparation’ was not a reference to the day on which preparations were made for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but a reference to the day before the Sabbath<sup>123</sup>. It always refers to ‘Friday’, even in the modern Greek language. In John 19:14 it does not refer to the preparations for the Passover meal, but to the Preparation for the Sabbath that belonged to the Passover Week (cf. 19:31,42). Thus, Jesus was crucified on this day of Preparation. The day following the Preparation Day would be Saturday, the Sabbath<sup>124</sup>.

**Eating the Passover a day late (18:28).** ‘Eating the Passover’ was the term denoting the celebration of the Passover meal. So why did all the Jews, including Jesus and his disciples, eat the Passover meal on Thursday evening (15<sup>th</sup> Nisan), while the Jews mentioned in John 18:28 were looking forward to eat their Passover meal on Friday evening (16<sup>th</sup> Nisan)?

This is a reference to the members of the Jewish Council (chief priests and elders) who were so thoroughly pre-occupied with the arrest and trial of Jesus that they had no time to eat their Passover meal at the regular time (Thursday evening). When everybody else was eating the Passover meal, they were awaiting Judas. They did not know when Judas would arrive in order to betray Jesus to them. They wanted to take part in the arrest of Jesus, even when they were only spectators<sup>125</sup>. After they had arrested Jesus, they were occupied with the night trials of Jesus before Annas, Caiaphas and the complete Sanhedrin. After that they were occupied with the trials before Pilate and Herod. It was during the trial before Pilate that these hypocrites did not want to enter the Praetorium in feigned fear to defile themselves before they would eat *their* Passover meal a day late! They regarded outward ceremonial defilement<sup>126</sup> to be much worse than moral defilement (killing an innocent person was against the moral law). Their one goal was to get rid of Jesus Christ (11:50,57). Only after they had succeeded to have him crucified, they ate their Passover lamb.

## APPLICATIONS

- 18:1. Like Jesus, you could also choose a quiet place to pray.
- 18:5. Jesus never lied. He never denied his real identity.
- 18:8-9. Jesus never lost one of the people that God the Father had entrusted to him.
- 18:10. Christians should never resort to the use of weapons or holy wars.
- 18:11. Christians should rather accept the suffering that God has permitted to happen.
- 18:12. Christians should not resist arrest, because they have to witness to high officials<sup>127</sup>.
- 18:20. Jesus always spoke openly to the world and said nothing in secret. He taught people even at the religious

<sup>118</sup> Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12,14; Luke 22:7-8,11,15

<sup>119</sup> Exodus 12:6; Ezra 6:19-20

<sup>120</sup> Leviticus 23:5-6

<sup>121</sup> Exodus 12:5-7; Esra 6:19-20

<sup>122</sup> Exodus 12:8; Ezra 6:21-22

<sup>123</sup> Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14,31,42

<sup>124</sup> Matthew 27:62

<sup>125</sup> Luke 22:52

<sup>126</sup> Luke 11:39,44; cf. Acts 10:28; 11:3

<sup>127</sup> Matthew 10:17-20

- places where they usually met.
- 18:21. Jesus challenged his accusers to ask the people that had heard him speak, because they knew what he had said.
- 18:23. Jesus challenged those that struck him to testify as to what is wrong. He confronted them with unjustly beating him when he spoke the truth.
- 18:34. Jesus challenged the governor to say what he himself believed about Jesus and not simply to say what other people said.
- 18:36. Jesus openly said that because his Kingdom was not of this world, he would not fight to defend himself.
- 18:37. Jesus openly said that he was the King of this Kingdom and that his Kingdom was spread by proclaiming the truth.
- 18:38. Christians should be prepared that they also may be tried and condemned to death, even though no basis for a charge may be found against them.
- 18:39-40. Christians must be prepared that many people in the world would rather choose Christians to be killed and let criminals continue to live.

### QUESTIONS

- 18:1-12. What shows that Jesus was in full control of the situation of his arrest?
- 18:13-27. Which trials did Jesus have before the Jewish authorities?
- 18:15-18,25-28a. What do you learn about Peter's denial of Jesus?
- 18:28b-19:16a. Which trials did Jesus have before the Roman authorities?
- 18:28. Was Jesus tried after or before the regular Passover meal?
- 18:32. What kind of death was Jesus about to die?

Were the trials of Jesus fair?