

# An Exegesis of John 18:1-27

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Whenever one witnesses a dramatic presentation of the life of the Lord Jesus one is exposed to a preponderance of material on what Jesus did, over and against what Jesus said. We, who so dearly treasure every word of salvation that came from the mouth of our Savior preserved for us in Holy Scripture, recognize the folly of such a cavalier attitude regarding the Word.

And yet we can scarcely blame anyone for getting caught up in the emotional drama of the life of the Lord Jesus, especially that portion of his life known as his Passion. Even we, who year after year, hear the same record of Jesus' sufferings and death during our Lenten services and devotions, can scarcely listen to the Gospel writers' words without being alternately attracted and repulsed by what we hear. It is not by accident that one film maker entitled the life of Jesus "The Greatest Story Ever Told." But it is so much more than a story. This is HIS-story, the history of God's love for sinful human beings, the history of Jesus' work of salvation, and the history of what was necessary to enable each one of us to look ahead to the open gates of heaven.

As we turn our attention to the 18th chapter of John's Gospel, we are, for the most part, leaving the words of Jesus behind. John, although the Holy Spirit leads him to record for us bits and pieces of conversation from Jesus, instead focuses his and our attention on the events. In the section before us today those events include the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, the trial before Annas, and Peter's denials of his Lord. We will be examining these events from John's perspective as we exegetically consider John 18:1-27. May God grant that our theological examination of the text would augment, rather than diminish, our wonder at what is recorded here. Let us then approach with reverence the beginning of Jesus' suffering at the hands of his enemies.

## The setting for the betrayal

*John 18:1 When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. on the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it. (NIV)*

*After saying these things Jesus went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron where there was a garden. He went into it with his disciples. (KNOT-Kujawski's New Original Translation).*

πέραν	-adverb meaning across, beyond, over, on the other side
χειμάρρου	- genitive singular of χεῖμαρρος, meaning a winter flowing, i.e., a brook that would be flowing in winter but usually dry in summer
εἰσῆλθεν	-3 <sup>rd</sup> singular aorist indicative of εἰσέρχομαι
κῆπος	- a garden, which the NIV interpretively translates as a grove of olive trees

We begin our section with the words, "when he had finished praying" (NIV) or "saying this" (KNOT). Since John omits the agony of Gethsemane it is reasonable to allow these phrases to refer to the discourses and prayers held in the upper room (Lenski), especially since our text indicates that Jesus and his disciples now enter a garden after crossing the brook Kidron, thereby

following the path of his father David, who crossed the brook when fleeing from his son, Absalom (2 Samuel 15:23,30).

The brook is called "Kidron." The name means that this was a seasonal brook that could be described as black or dark, turbid and muddy. It is certainly a fitting place for the last free journey of Jesus and his disciples as Luther attests: "The evangelist means to say Christ went over the true dark brook, yea, in my opinion He went over the black brook. He says nothing of the Mount of olives and of the beautiful pleasant place, but refers only to this dark brook, as the one that fits best to this matter of the arrest and death of Christ."

The garden, as John calls it, is named Gethsemane by the Synoptics. It is referred to as a grove of olive trees, in reference to an "oil-press" as mentioned by Lenski. It is entirely possible that there were no gardens or groves in Jerusalem proper at this time. With these references, then, John gives us the setting for the betrayal of Jesus.

### **The traitor arrives**

*John 18:2-3 Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. (NIV)*

*Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often gathered there with his disciples. Therefore Judas came also, taking a cohort and servants from the chief priests and Pharisees, who were carrying torches, lamps and weapons. (KNOT)*

σπεῖραν	-a cohort
λαβῶν	-nominative singular masculine 2 aorist active participle of λαμβάνω meaning to take
ὑπερέτας	-accusative plural of ὑπερέτης meaning attendant or servant; here probably referring to the temple police or Levites
ἔρχεται	-3 <sup>rd</sup> singular present indicative of ἔρχομαι construed as an historical, or what Lenski calls a dramatic present

Luke 21:37 tells us that since Monday of Holy Week "Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives." If this can be connected with Gethsemane, as Lenski believes and as Hendriksen considers to be "within the realm of possibility," (p. 376) this certainly explains John's words in v. 2 regarding the manner in which Judas was able to know where Jesus could be found.

And "so Judas came to the grove" with the purpose of carrying out his contract of betraying Jesus. He does not come alone. There are representatives of four different groups assembled to take Jesus: Romans (mentioned only by John), servants of the chief priests, members of the Pharisees, and one of Jesus' own disciples. We cannot be sure how many men were involved. John uses the words "cohort and servants" to refer to the assembly. A cohort was a tenth of a Roman Legion, obviously the one stationed in Jerusalem. They could number perhaps as many as 600 soldiers. However as Lenski correctly points out we "need not assume the presence of the entire cohort" (Lenski 1174). Some believe that this Roman presence had been secured at the request of the Sanhedrin. I suppose this is a logical assumption especially if Pilate's remark in Matthew 27:62-66 to "take a guard" to watch Jesus' tomb refers to Roman

soldiers; an account which would show the Jews and Romans working together once again. There is no reason to doubt that the Sanhedrin would and did request Roman forces.

And yet the Jewish authorities were also out in force on their own. The "servants" of the high priests and Pharisees indicate that this assembly had the full authority of the Sanhedrin.

This assembly of combined Roman and Jewish forces must have caused quite a sight, armed as they were with "torches, lanterns, and weapons (referred to by the Synoptics as swords and clubs)." While most commentators assume the use of torches and lanterns was in expectance of Jesus hiding among the garden, Ylvisaker offers a different view: "Judas had expected undoubtedly to find all asleep. For this reason he had ordered the multitude to provide themselves with lamps; for, though the moon was full, a search might, nevertheless, be required among the trees or under the brambles in the darkness." (Ylvisaker 701) In any event, Christ's friends were few, his enemies were many. Those enemies went out to capture Jesus, prepared for any human resistance that Jesus and his disciples might offer.

### Jesus is arrested

*John 18:4-11 Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (and Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" and they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." "I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go." This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me." Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (the servant's name was Malchus.) Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the father has given me?" (NIV)*

*Then Jesus, knowing everything that was going to happen to him, went out and said to them, "Who are you seeking?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." He said to them, "I am he." (And Judas the betrayer was standing with them.) As he said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground. He asked them again, "Who are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. Since you are seeking me, let these men go." This was so that the word he had spoken might be fulfilled, namely, "I have not lost one of those which you have given me." Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) Then Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the scabbard! Shall I not drink the cup which my Father has given me?" (KNOT)*

Εἰδώς	-nominative singular participle of οἶδα "to know"
ἐρχόμενα	-accusative plural neuter present participle of ἔρχομαι "to come, go"
λέγει	-3 <sup>rd</sup> singular present active indicative of λέγω "to say"
ζητεῖτε	-2 <sup>nd</sup> plural present active indicative of ζητέω "to look for, to seek"
εἰσπηκει	-3 <sup>rd</sup> singular pluperfect of ἵστημι "to stand" translated as an imperfect
ἀπεκρίθησαν	-3 <sup>rd</sup> plural 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist passive indicative of ἀποκρίνομαι "to answer, reply"
εἶπεν	-3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist active indicative of εἶπον
ἀπῆλθον	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> plural 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist active indicative of ἀπέρχομαι "to come, go back"
τὰ ὀπίσω	- "the behind parts" accusative because of εἰς

ἐπηρώτησεν	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist active indicative of ἐπερωτάω “to ask”
ζητεῖτε	- 2 <sup>nd</sup> plural present active indicative of ζητέω “to seek”
εἶπαν	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> plural 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist active indicative of εἶπον (λέγω)
ἀπεκρίθη	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist passive indicative of ἀποκρίνομαι “to answer”
εἶπον	- 1 <sup>st</sup> singular 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist of λέγω
ἄφετε	- 2 <sup>nd</sup> plural 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist active imperative of ἀφίημι “to let go, send away”
ὑπάγειν	- present infinitive of ὑπάγω “to lead, bring away;” intransitive = “to go away”
εἰ οὖν	- “since”
πληρωθῆ	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist passive subjunctive of πληρόω “to make full, fill”
δεδοκᾶς	- 2 <sup>nd</sup> singular perfect active indicative of δίδωμι “to give”
ἀπόλεσα	- 1 <sup>st</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist active indicative of ἀπόλλυμι “to ruin, destroy, lose”
ἵνα	- final (purpose) clause
ὅτι	- recitative
εἴλκυσεν	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist active indicative of ἐλκύω “to drag, draw”
ἔπαισεν	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist active indicative of παίω “to strike, hit”
ἔχων	- nominative singular masculine present participle of ἔχω “to have” causal
ἀπέκοψεν	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist indicative of ἀποκόπτω “to cut off”
βάλε	- 2 <sup>nd</sup> singular 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist active imperative of βάλλω “to throw, put, place”
πίω	- 1 <sup>st</sup> singular 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist subjunctive of πίνω “to drink”; strong future negation

It is at this point that I have heard many modern speakers on Christ's passion imply that Jesus is caught up in a whirlwind of events blowing wildly out of control. He becomes from now on, in their view, nothing more than a pawn in the machinations of the Jews and the Romans. A look at this portion of John's Gospel indicates that nothing could be further from the truth but that instead, Jesus is going willingly to the cross to carry out the work of salvation only he could do. "From the description of John the roles of pursuers and pursued might have been reversed." (Kretzman 508)

As John tells us it is Jesus who initiates the confrontation, an initiation that comes with full knowledge of what was taking place! When John includes the phrase "knowing all that was going to happen to him" he is echoing his words in chapter 13 v. 1 "Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father."

It is perhaps at this time, after Jesus has gone out to meet the assembly, that Judas kisses him, thereby carrying out the pre-arranged signal of identifying the target. This need to identify Jesus to his enemies has been explained as necessary due to the time of day and the faulty lighting from the torches. I believe that John's revealing to us the presence of Roman soldiers adds another reason for the kiss. Perhaps it was for their benefit more than any of the other captors that Judas identifies Jesus as he does.

As Jesus asks the question, "Who is it you want?" receives the reply "Jesus of Nazareth," and responds: "I am he," we are struck again by who Jesus is. Not the cringing coward is he, but one who seeks to be found, even by his enemies.

A few comments can be made regarding this first exchange of words. "Jesus of Nazareth" was enough to identify this particular Jesus. Jesus was a common name in Israel. This "Jesus" full name would have been "Jesus, son of Joseph, the Nazarene."

Jesus' answer "I am he" does not have the object "he" in the Greek. A few commentaries use this omission as an opportunity to recall the Old Testament "I am" as a sign of Jesus' divinity. While the Greek would permit this interpretation, the context and John's Gentile readers wouldn't suggest this explanation. It seems best to simply take this phrase as a predicate nominative, which the regular enclitic form of the verb "to be" without its own accent would explain.

In v. 5 we have one of John's familiar parenthetical *des*, the footnote indicating that Judas, the traitor, is standing by and observing his work. What his attitude or actions were at this time is unknown. Whether he was, as I recall an artist having portrayed, leaning up against a tree in a nonchalant manner, or cowering in the midst of the armed assembly, is immaterial. "John brings in the traitor here because he wants his readers to remember what the other evangelists have reported with all sufficiency regarding the traitor's kiss, to which John desires to add nothing more." (Lenski, 1180)

And how it must have surprised Judas to see what took place. "When Jesus said, 'I am he,' they drew back and fell to the ground." With all of the assembled might of the Romans, the Jews, and the traitor, they could not stand before the simple, mighty word of Jesus! Perhaps Luther's comment on this miracle is best for our consideration even today. He wrote: "This was a peculiar and divine power which Jesus intended to display, not only in order to frighten the Jews, but also to strengthen his disciples...Therefore the divine power which he so often and now in the garden displays in one word, this power will not be able to allow itself much longer still to be restrained, his foes must go down, but he will rule. This the disciples especially were to conclude from this miraculous act." Let us never forget that our Savior is the same Savior who loved so much that he allowed himself to be taken captive by a fallen and vanquished enemy as part of his work of salvation.

In v. 7 the drama moves on as the confrontation is now repeated: "Again he asked them, 'Who is it you want?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.'" As we wonder at the audacity of this response Luther expounds on the hardening of the human heart: "Even if heaven and earth were created anew before the eyes of such people, and the greatest miracles were wrought that could possibly be wrought, it would avail nothing."

The text continues: "'I told you that I am he,' Jesus answered. 'If you are looking for me, then let these men go.' This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: 'I have not lost one of those you gave me.'"

With this exchange we have a different purpose of Jesus coming to the fore. He has already demonstrated his control over the situation (in spite of which demonstration the assembly is insistent upon taking Jesus prisoner). Now he exhibits his concern for his disciples. Having already foretold that they would all abandon him this night, he is nevertheless concerned for their safety. And yet why is he concerned? His reference to the words "I have not lost one of those you gave me" cannot refer simply to the physical loss of these men for as far as we know all except John would eventually die a martyr's death. John 6:39 and 17:12 refer to a spiritual, and not a physical loss of his followers. Luther is of the opinion that the disciples' weak faith could not have handled capture at this time, and stated further: "With these words He preserved them that they might be lost neither temporally nor eternally; and in their soul they remain safe

forever, although afterwards in due time had to yield their bodies, and were obliged to give glory to God by their death."

"But what of Judas?" one might ask. Was he not given to the Lord Jesus and was he not lost? Jesus has answered that question for us in the John 17:12. reference when he said, "None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled."

Jesus is in control of the situation. Jesus has seen to it that his disciples are taken care of according to his will. But one of his disciples is not content to let the matter rest. It should come as no surprise to us that it is the brash apostle Peter who draws his sword and cuts off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest (names which John alone mentions). Peter is once again standing in the way of the cross, just as he did in his conversations in the upper room as he continually contradicted his Lord. I don't believe we can read any motivation into his actions other than love. But doing the wrong thing out of love is still doing the wrong thing. True love for our Savior, a Savior who has already driven back the attacking force by the power of his word, does not take matters into its own control. True love listens and obeys, anything else gets in the way of the work of the Lord. And perhaps in this action of Peter we have a lesson for today as well. We are reminded that our Lord is interested in two facets of our service to him. He desires our actions to be carried out in love for Him, but at the same time he desires our actions to be carried out according to his will. The end never justifies the means in service to our Lord. Or, as Matthew Henry wrote in Peter's case: "Thus, while he seemed to fight for Christ, he fought against him." (Henry 1173)

An interesting sidelight is that only John mentions Peter by name as the assailant. The popular opinion seems to be that the Synoptics don't mention Peter because Peter was still alive at the time of their writing and might still become the victim of revenge for his action.

Thus it is Peter that Jesus rebukes, commanding him to put away his sword. His command reaffirms for us the understanding that any unauthorized use of power, especially in the interest of Christ and his Word, is sternly frowned upon by Jesus. As we know from the Synoptics Jesus heals Malchus and the disciples run away and are not pursued by the assembly. Perhaps in this we see yet another instance of Jesus in absolute control, for it is difficult to imagine any Roman force allowing a Jew to escape who has drawn blood in its presence.

Permit one final comment on this section referring to the phrase: "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" The strong future negation that begins this phrase makes clear to us the determination of the Lord Jesus to carry out his work, even though that work includes drinking the cup of suffering. For the use of the "cup" as a symbol of suffering under the punitive judgement of God we can confer Matthew 20:22; Psalm 16:5; Psalm 75:8; and Isaiah 51:17 and 22. The perfect "has given me" indicates that this cup is already in Jesus' possession as he speaks.

### **Jesus taken to Annas**

*John 18:12-14 Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. they bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people. (NIV)*

*Then the cohort with its commander and the Jewish underlings arrested Jesus and bound him. They led him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that*

year. Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good for one man to die for the people. (KNOT)

χιλίαρχος	- the leader of 1000 soldiers , the military tribune
ὑπηρέται	- nominative plural of ὑπηρέτης "servant, helper, assistant"
συνέλαβον	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> plural 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist active indicative of συλλαμβάνω "to arrest, seize, grasp, apprehend"
ἔδησαν	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> plural 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist active indicative of δέω "to bind, tie"
ἤγαγον	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> plural 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist active indicative of ἄγω "to lead"
τοῦ ἐνιαυτὸν ἐκείου	- genitive of time within which "of that year"
συμβουλεύσας	- nominative singular masculine 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist participle of συμβουλεύω "to counsel, advise"
συμφέρει	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular present indicative of συμφέρω "to bring together, help, be advantageous"
ἀποθανεῖν	- 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist infinitive of ἀποθνήσκω "to die"

The major question that confronts us in this section of the gospel account is why Jesus is first brought to "Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year." (v. 13). Annas, we might recall, had been the high priest and was deposed by the Romans. He still retained considerable power, as evidenced by the fact that five sons and one son-in-law became High Priests after him. As we factor in the understanding that Annas was still the high priest in the eyes of the people, we could surmise that Caiaphas still needed Annas' support in the overall condemnation. Of further interest for speculation is the possibility that Annas had been in charge of the money-changers in the temple and sending Jesus to him was according Annas his pound of flesh. One final explanation is that Caiaphas needed time to assemble the entire Sanhedrin for the trial; and sending Jesus first to Annas provided him with the time that he needed. This explanation is still plausible, even though Caiaphas' planning had undoubtedly been going on for some time, as John reminds us of his prophecy that "it would be good if one man died for the people." (v. 14 referring to 11:49-50).

### **Peter's first denial**

*John 18:15-18 Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in. "Surely you are not another of this man's disciples?" the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, "I am not." It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself. (NIV)*

*Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus, That disciple was known to the high priest, and he went in with Jesus to the high priest's courtyard. But Peter was standing outside at the door. Then the other disciple, who was known by the high priest, went out and spoke to the girl at the door, and brought Peter in. Then the girl at the door said to Peter, "Surely you are not also another of this man's disciples?" He answered, "I am not." Now the servants and the*

*underlings had been standing by a fire they had made, because it was cold and they were warming themselves. Peter was also standing with them and warming himself. (KNOT)*

Ἠκολούθει	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular imperfect of ἀκολουθέω "to follow"
Γνοστῶς	- "known", an acquaintance, friend
συνεισῆλθεν	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist indicative of συνεισέρχομαι "to enter, go in with"
αὐλήν	- accusative singular of αὐλή "an unroofed enclosure, courtyard"
εἰστήκει	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular pluperfect of ἵστημι "to put" intransitive = "to stand"
εἰσήγαγεν	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist of "to lead, bring in"
τοῦ ἀρχιερέως	- "to the high priest" subjective genitive
λεγεῖ	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular present active indicative of λέγω "to say"
Μή	- expects a "no" answer
εἰστήκεισαν	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> plural pluperfect of ἵστημι "to stand"
ἀνθρακιαν	- accusative singular, a charcoal fire
πεποιηκότες	- nominative plural masculine perfect active participle of ποιέω "to make, do"
ἐθερμαίνοντο	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> plural middle imperfect of θερμαίνω "to warm (oneself)"
ἦν...ἔστω	- Periphrastic imperfect (nominative singular masculine perfect participle of ἵστημι)
θερμαινόμενος	- nominative singular masculine present middle participle of θερμαίνω

In this section John provides us with tantalizing details unknown to the Synoptics, details available only to him as an eye-witness of the events. John is, without a doubt, the one referred to as "another disciple . . . known to the high priest." As referred to in the word study "known" can mean someone as unfamiliar as a mere acquaintance or as intimate as a friend. As far as I can tell there are two main possibilities regarding this "known" relationship. The first is perhaps the one most widely recognized citing the possibility that John had priestly blood in him through his mother, who is described as a "daughter of Aaron." This would make him almost one of the family, albeit a distant one of the family. The other possibility which seems to have some basis in fact according to recent studies is that John was a fish monger with the high priests as customers. Since Scripture does not tell us how John was "known" our possibilities remain mere guesses.

Still John is known by the High Priest's household. He is allowed into the courtyard, while Peter, who had accompanied him, had to "wait outside at the door." No doubt that security was still very much in force, Jesus' voluntary surrender notwithstanding. Peter is not allowed into the courtyard until John vouches for him. As Peter is brought into the courtyard, the stage is set for his denials of his Lord to begin. Lenski places the blame for what follows on John: "The reason why John recounts all these details is because he is taking full blame. Instead of reminding Peter of the warning of Jesus and taking Peter away, John, even John himself, helps to make Peter disregard that warning." (Lenski 1194). My personal opinion is that Lenski stretches the point. I read no remorse in John's words as we might expect if he were taking the blame. To me John is simply relating the events as he saw them, events in which neither man stands out as a paragon of faithful obedience.



It is interesting to note that Peter does not enter the courtyard openly revealing himself as one of Jesus' disciples. He, along with John, seems to have been passing himself off as an interested bystander, as evidenced by the question raised by the girl at the door. With the Μῆ of v. 17 expecting a "no" answer, the girl seems to be speaking with heavy irony, even to the point of being derogatory: "You aren't one of THIS MAN'S disciples, are you?"

Peter's denial is a simple one. "I am not," he replies. From a human standpoint we can scarcely imagine any different answer, even in light of his earlier bravado. He has come sneaking into the courtyard, hiding his discipleship. And when confronted he carries through with denying his Lord.

An ordinary application of this lesson for us is to beware our own bravado and self-confidence, lest we make the same error as did Peter. But perhaps there is another application for our consideration. Perhaps it is worthwhile to note with Kretzmann that "it is always foolish and often dangerous for a disciple of Jesus to join the ranks of unbelievers. If one's faith is challenged in the exercise of duty, defense is generally swift and sure. But when one affiliates with his enemies, half the defense is taken away in advance." (Kretzmann 510).

Regardless of the application, our text now leaves Peter withdrawing further among the others in the courtyard. John gives us some wonderful imagery of the event. As we read v. 18 where it says, "It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter, also was standing with them, warming himself," we can perhaps place yourselves in Peter's sandals, seeking warmth for his body in the face of the chilling reality of the pending sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus.

### **The high priest questions Jesus**

*John 18:19-24 Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. "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." When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. "Is that any way to answer the high priest?" He demanded. "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest. (NIV)*

*Then the high priest questioned Jesus concerning his disciples and his teaching. Jesus responded, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews assemble, and I said nothing in secret. Why are you asking me? Ask those who heard what I said to them. Look, they know what I said." When he said this one of the underlings nearby gave Jesus a blow, saying, "Is that the way you answer the high priest?" Jesus answered him, "If I spoke in an evil way, testify concerning the evil. But if well, why did you strike me?" Then Annas sent him away still bound to Caiaphas the high priest. (KNOT)*

ἠρώτησεν	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 1st aorist active indicative of ἐρωτάω "to ask, ask a question"
ἀπεκρίθη	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist passive indicative of ἀποκρίνομαι "to answer"
παρρησία	- dative singular "openness, frankness" adverbially = openly
λελάληκα	- 1 <sup>st</sup> singular perfect active indicative of λαλέω "to speak"
ἐδίδαξα	- 1 <sup>st</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist active indicative of διδάσκω "to teach"

συνέρχονται	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> plural present indicative of συνέρχομαι "to come together, assemble, gather"
ἐλάλησα	- 1 <sup>st</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist active indicative of λαλέω "to speak"
ἔρωτᾷς	- 2 <sup>nd</sup> singular present indicative of ἐρωτάω "to ask"
ἐρώτησον	- 2 <sup>nd</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist active indicative of λαλέω "to speak"
ἀκηκοότας	- accusative plural masculine perfect participle of ἀκούω "to hear"
ἐλάλησα	- 1 <sup>st</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist active indicative of λαλέω "to speak"
οἶδασεν	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> plural of οἶδα "to know"
εἶπον	- 1 <sup>st</sup> singular 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist active of λέγω "to say"
εἰπόντος	- genitive singular masculine 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist active participle of εἶπον "to say" (with αὐτοῦ = genitive absolute)
ἔδωκεν	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist active indicative of δίδωμι "to give"
ῥαπισμα	- "a blow, an open hand" particularly insulting
εἰπων	- nominative singular masculine 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist active participle of εἶπον. The aorist participle assimilates to the aorist verb.
ἀποκρίνη	- 2 <sup>nd</sup> singular present indicative of ἀποκρίνομαι "to answer"
ἀπεκρίθη	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist passive indicative of ἀποκρίνομαι "to answer"
ἐλάλησα	- 1 <sup>st</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist active indicative of λαλέω "to say"
μαρτύρησον	- 2 <sup>nd</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist imperative of μαρτυρέω "to testify, bear witness"
δέρεις	- 2 <sup>nd</sup> singular present active indicative of δέρω "to strike"
ἀπέστειλεν	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular aorist active indicative of ἀποστέλλω "to send away"
δεδεμὸν	accusative singular masculine perfect passive participle of δέω "to bind"

We have left Peter in the courtyard as John turns our attention to the questioning of Jesus by Annas. Mention could be made at this point regarding a variant reading that places v. 24 prior to v. 14, which would mean that the questioning of which we read took place under Caiaphas and not Annas. The earliest and most widespread manuscripts point to the order as is in our Bibles. It would appear as though the latter reading/amendment came about because of an apparent difficulty in referring to Annas as High Priest, when, in truth, Caiaphas held the office at this time. On this point, we can look back to the explanations offered under our discussion of vv. 12-14, with the additional comment that both Acts 4:6 and Luke 3:2 specifically refer to Annas as the High Priest.

One note before we begin our discussion of the trial itself is that there is Second Century secular evidence that trials at night were illegal. I offer that bit of information not, as any earth-shaking revelation, but merely that it is certainly in keeping with what else we know of the "convict at any cost" attitude of the trial and questioning.

The questioning that is put to Jesus reads has two parts. He is asked first of all about his disciples, then about his teaching. Jesus responds only to the question of his teaching when he answers: "I have spoken openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues (as in Nazareth) or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret." By answering in this fashion Jesus removes any need to comment on his people. After all, if his teaching is well-known and true, obvious even to his captors, then there is nothing wrong with his people.

Needless to say Jesus' response does not please at least one of his captors. As we read v. 22 we can almost hear the slap of the open hand across Jesus' face as though we are present, coupled with the indignant question, "Is that any way to answer the high priest?"

Jesus' response amazes us. His "If...if" states a simple condition of fact. He admits nothing either way; but instead states his position directly. "If I said something wrong, testify to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" Jesus remains the one in control, even though he is the one who is bound, as we read, "Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest."

The NIV has a footnote for v. 24 "had sent." (perfect) instead (:f "sent" (simple aorist). This appears to be a concession to the kJ which attempted to deal with the apparent problem over the different number of trials to which Jesus is subjected. The simplest reading again seems to be the best, namely, that Jesus is taken first to Annas, and then, after this preliminary hearing, to Caiaphas.

### **Peter's second and third denials**

*John 18:25-27 As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "Surely you are not another of his disciples?" 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. (NIV)*

*Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said to him, "Are you not also one of this man's disciples?" He denied it and said, "I am not." One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Didn't I see you in the garden with him?" Then Peter denied it again. And immediately a rooster crowed. (KNOT)*

ἑστώς	- nominative singular masculine perfect passive participle of ἵστημι "to stand"
θερμαινόμενος	- nominative singular present middle participle of θερμαίνω "to warm oneself"
ἦν	- when combined with the above two participles this forms a perfect periphrastic
ἠρνήσατο	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist indicative of ἀρνέομαι "to refuse, disdain, or deny"
λέγει	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular present active indicative of λέγω "to say"
συγγενής	- "kinsman, relative"
εἶδον	- 1 <sup>st</sup> singular 2 <sup>nd</sup> aorist of ὁράω "to see"
κῆπῳ	- dative singular of κήπος "garden"
ἐφώνησεν	- 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular 1 <sup>st</sup> aorist active indicative of φωνεώ "to produce a sound, cry out"

As we turn our attention to the final verses of this assignment we are confronted by the question of how to number Peter's denials. In other words, how does John's record of the second and third denials of Peter correspond to the second and third denials as recorded by the Synoptics?

In discussing this problem we begin by listing the denials of Peter as recorded by the Synoptics who tell of Peter's denials in one narrative Mt 26:69-75; Mk 14:66-72; and Lk 22:55-62. They can be summarized as follows:

1. Peter is asked by a servant girl in the courtyard whether he was also with Jesus. Peter denies: "I don't know what you are talking about." (Mark adds: "I don't understand" to Peter's reply; Luke indicates that this was in the middle of the courtyard).
2. Peter goes to the gateway where another girl sees him and says to those around her: "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." Peter denies again, with an oath: "I don't know the man."
3. Peter is again questioned a little while later (Mark indicates that the question concerning his accent focuses on it being Galilean. Luke agrees and adds that this took place "about an hour later" which would account for John 18:19-24) again in the yard. Peter denies the third time, calling down curses on himself.

As we look at John's account we find the following list of denials:

1. v. 17 is surely John's record of the first denial as recorded in the Synoptics.
2. v. 25 lists another denial taking place as Peter is once again "standing and warming himself." This would take place at the center of the courtyard, and not at the gate. In fact, John uses an identical phrase "standing and warming himself" in both v. 17 and v. 25.
3. John's record of a third denial has Peter in the same place and adds the question by the kinsman of Malchus.

Our options are as follows:

- a. John is wrong, the Bible is wrong, and we're wasting our time at our conference today.
- b. The Synoptics are wrong, the Bible is wrong, and we're wasting our time at our conference today. (It scarcely seems necessary to reject options a and b out of hand as ridiculous in light of the Bible being God's inspired and inerrant Word!)
- c. John's three denials correspond exactly with the three denials in the other Gospels. This option is advanced by a number of commentators as the simplest explanation. But this does not explain how John says that the denial (his #2; in v. 25 takes place in the courtyard when the Synoptics say it was at the gate.
- d. John doesn't mention the second denial at all and draws two denials out of what the Synoptics call the third.

I personally prefer this explanation (offered by Lenski, et al.) as the most plausible. While Scripture says Peter would deny Jesus three times, it does not say "only" three times. In the cases of questioning Peter the plural is used in the verb forms, indicating that he was questioned by more than three people. Thus it is not inconceivable that Peter responded to more than three people. What is most telling is the Greek in v. 25, showing that the second denial as recorded by John occurs in a different place than the second denial as recorded by the Synoptics.

Having addressed that issue we conclude with a few final comments on this section.

In regard to Peter's cursing and swearing (not mentioned by John) Calvin believed that this was a simple example of the way sin progresses, from a simple denial to adamant refusal. On the same subject the renowned preacher Peter Marshall ; commented that Peter was "cursing as only a sailor can curse."

John alone records the challenge from Malchus' relative, giving us another insight into John's familiarity with the High Priest's courtyard. The relative's question, "Didn't I see you with him...?" begin with an οὐκ, which implies, but does not demand a positive answer. The use of the personal pronoun ἔγω, is also a sign of certainty, yet not complete certainty. In other words, he is sure; but not completely sure that Peter is the man he thinks he is.

Finally we have v. 27 "Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow." We know what happened, how the Lord looked straight at Peter, who went out and wept bitterly. What a reminder to us that it is finally the Lord who brings us all back, whether we are a Peter denying his Lord, or a pastor in the Manitowoc conference with our own follies and foibles in our attempts to serve the same Lord Jesus who would go on to his suffering under Pontius Pilate, his crucifixion, his death, his burial and his resurrection. But that is a subject for future papers.

### **Conclusion**

It is always a bittersweet privilege for a pastor to restudy the events of our Savior's passion as we do each Lenten season. Once again today, while looking at a portion of John 18, we continue to be amazed at the unlawful activities of Christ's enemies, the unfaithful and fearful activities of Christ's people, and the loving faithfulness of Christ himself. In John 18:1-27 we have looked at the activity of people like Annas and Caiaphas, Peter and John, the woman at the gate, and the kinsman of Malchus. May we at the same time learn better to examine our own activity and rejoice in the love of our Savior who gave himself for us.

To God Be The Glory!

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Author's Note: The Luther quotations in this paper were taken from the sources listed above. Additional information was gathered from class lectures and presentations given during the Summer Quarter at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI, 1990.