



## International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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### **John 18:12-24 Commentary** **New Revised Standard Version**

**Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse [\*International Bible Study Commentary\*](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [\*International Bible Study Forum\*](#).

**(John 18:12) So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him.**

Judas accompanied and led those who arrested Jesus to the garden where Jesus was accustomed to praying with His disciples. Jesus knew all that would happen to Him that night and He gave himself over to them willingly without a fight. Binding Jesus as a criminal would have been a common practice, and surely Judas knew from seeing Jesus quiet a raging storm on the Sea of Galilee that if Jesus wanted, He could easily break His bonds.

Could tempting Jesus to fight and escape death have been one of the devil's devious plans? The devil certainly tempted Jesus not to go to the cross but take the easy way out. Remember when the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness. In Matthew 4:8-9, we read, "Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.'" And remember Jesus' response to Peter after He spoke about his coming death. In Matthew 16:22-23, we read, "And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must

never happen to you.’ But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.’”

**(John 18:13) First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year.**

Prior to the Roman occupation of Jerusalem, Jewish leadership appointed a high priest for life. Under Roman rule, depending on their cooperation and corruption the high priest was selected and removed at the pleasure of Roman authorities. Rome conquered Jerusalem in B.C. 63. Appointed by the Romans, Annas served as high priest from A.D. 6 to 15, and he arranged for his four sons and his son-in-law Caiaphas to serve as high priests after him. Jesus was arrested and crucified sometime between A.D. 30 and 33, while Caiaphas served as high priest. While Annas lived he was head of the family, and Caiaphas and his sons deferred to Annas. Therefore, Jesus was first taken to Annas.

Though the Bible does not tell us, Annas’ family probably lived in a large family compound or palace for they were rich, influential, and dishonest. They conspired together with the Roman authorities to remain in power. It seems plausible that with all the interest in arresting and killing Jesus, and having failed before, that Caiaphas may have been in the same courtyard with Annas, so Jesus was taken only a short distance across the courtyard to be questioned by him. The courtyard was quite large to contain as many people as it did. As high priests, Annas and his sons controlled the religious environment. They became increasingly wealthy from their management of the temple and especially the Court of the Gentiles where sacrificial animals (that had to be perfect, as determined by a corrupt priesthood) were sold, and where Roman and other foreign coins were exchanged for temple shekels. Money with the face of a Roman emperor or other person could not be offered in the temple because these coins were considered idolatrous. This business was highly profitable for the high priests and priesthood. Jesus cleansed this temple court telling the priests and the crowds, “Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!” (John 2:16). Because Jesus cleansed the temple, Annas and Caiaphas had personal reasons for wanting Jesus killed before He caused them more trouble and lost them more

money than they thought He was worth (in their opinion). The Court of the Gentiles did not stay clean very long, and from reading the accounts of the temple cleansings by Jesus in the gospels, Jesus may have cleansed the temple at least in the first year of His ministry and in the last year of His ministry.

**(John 18:14) Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.**

Before a council meeting of the chief priests and the Pharisees, in John 11:49-50, John wrote, “But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed.’” After Jesus rose from the dead, Peter told the high priests and the council (Sanhedrin) in Acts 5:29-32, “We must obey God rather than any human authority. The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.” Yes. Jesus did “die for the people,” but not with the results that Caiaphas intended. Caiaphas planned Jesus’ death so he and his family could stay in power over the people and the temple. After the Jews rebelled against Rome, and after Titus called for the Jews to surrender (which they refused to do) in A.D. 70, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, the temple, the sacrificial system, and the corrupt priesthood.

**(John 18:15) Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest,**

According to Jewish law, one who was arrested could call witnesses in his defense. Perhaps Peter and John thought they could follow Jesus to serve as witnesses in His behalf, for Peter had said he would not desert Jesus, but would die with Him (see Matthew 26:33-35). But Jesus did not call witnesses in His defense, and we learn in Mark 14:56, “Many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree.”

It took two eyewitnesses to convict someone of a crime. Of course, there would be nothing just or legal about Jesus' trial before the high priest. Though the rest of Jesus' disciples fled in fear when the soldiers arrested Jesus, Peter fled after he denied knowing Jesus, and John courageously followed Jesus until after they crucified Jesus. John found no need to recount everything the other gospels reported about the arrest of Jesus, but we learn from Luke 22:49-50 that Jesus' healed the ear of Malchus after Peter cut off his ear with his sword (see John 18:10). So, Peter had extraordinary courage to follow Jesus, and if Jesus had not healed the ear of Malchus, then the guards would have been looking for Peter to arrest and crucify Peter too. Despite the risks, Peter followed Jesus. John had less reason for concern about his safety, for the high priest knew him (the Bible does not tell us how he knew him). Some suggest that for many years John and his family had sold fish to the family of the High Priest (the Fish Gate was near the Temple), and that is why he knew John. Peter and John became eyewitnesses of His trial for those who hear the gospel and for all who read the Bible. In any event, we know that at least two of Jesus' followers witnessed His trial (Nicodemus may have attended as a member of the Sanhedrin). John, Mary (Jesus' mother), and some other women became witnesses of Jesus' crucifixion and death. All Jesus' disciples except Judas would see Him after He rose from the dead.

**(John 18:16) but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in.**

Since John stayed as close to Jesus as possible and since some of the slaves of the high priest knew him, John went inside the courtyard, but Peter was not allowed through the gate. When John realized Peter was not with him, he went back and brought him into the courtyard too. Those guarding the gate must of known John too.

**(John 18:17) The woman said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."**

Though Peter showed great courage, Peter did not have enough courage to testify that he was one of Jesus' disciples until after Jesus rose from the

dead and filled Peter with the Holy Spirit. Then, as an apostle, in Acts 5:25-33, we learn how Peter courageously testified before the high priest and said, “We must obey God rather than any human authority” (Acts 5:29). Hence, we have additional good evidence that Jesus did rise from the dead; for Peter began to show more than extraordinary courage when he preached on the Day of Pentecost and when he was later tried by the Sanhedrin for preaching about Jesus. Before Jesus rose from the dead, fear overcame Peter’s courage; so, when answering a slave woman (who could easily call on the guards nearby to arrest him) Peter denied that he was a disciple of Jesus, as Jesus had foretold him. In John 13:37, Peter had told Jesus, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” And in John 13:38, Jesus replied, “Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.” As He had prayed, Jesus did not lose any of His disciples (Judas was not a true follower of Jesus). After His resurrection Jesus restored Peter, made him an apostle, and told him to “feed His sheep” (John 21:15-19).

**(John 18:18) Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.**

Peter mingled with the slaves and the police to keep warm around the fire. Even though he had cut off Malchus’ ear, Jesus had healed him. Perhaps he had no fear that they would recognize him in the dark as a disciple of Jesus. But, Peter could not disguise his Galilean accent.

**(John 18:19) Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching.**

If the trial had been just, the high priest would not have asked Jesus to testify against himself or incriminate himself by asking Jesus’ questions. In a just trial, two or more witnesses would be called to testify against the defendant, and two of them must agree that they had seen the defendant commit a crime, and in Jesus’ case a crime that deserved death. Instead, the high priest tried to entrap Jesus by asking Jesus questions about His teachings. In Matthew 22:15, we learn how the Pharisees had tried to

entrap Jesus by asking questions and how they had failed. Annas also tried to entrap Jesus at His trial by asking questions. But Jesus acted on what He had preached in Matthew 7:6. He refused to throw the pearls of His teaching and wisdom before swine. He refused to talk about His disciples or place them in danger. Jesus only answered a few questions that He knew deserved an answer, and He only gave answers that He knew would later benefit those who would learn about His trial, His answers, and believe in Him as the Bible teaches about Him.

**(John 18:20) Jesus answered, “I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret.**

In accordance with the law, Jesus told the high priest that since He had spoken openly, witnesses could be called to testify for or against Him. In a legal trial, He was not compelled to testify for or against himself. Importantly, Jesus told the high priest that He always spoke “openly to the world” and He had “said nothing in secret.” Therefore, we know that there are no ancient or contemporary books or ancient or modern societies (no matter what they claim) that possess “the secret teachings of Jesus.” Jesus gave no secret teachings, so none exist. Jesus spoke openly to the world to save the world. When His disciples did not understand Him (His parables, for example), Jesus explained himself, and they recorded in the Bible what Jesus explained. Jesus taught in easily accessible and important places where anyone who wanted to hear what He taught could hear Him. Priests and others in authority heard Him teach in synagogues and in the temple, so they knew what He taught, and they could easily testify to what He said.

**(John 18:21) Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.”**

Legally, Annas should not have asked Jesus any questions, so Jesus asked him, “Why do you ask me?” Though our translations make it seem so, Jesus’ question of the high priest was not rude or sarcastic. Jesus stated a point of law that the high priest had violated, and Jesus showed everyone that the high priest had violated the law at His trial. Since Jesus had spoken openly and had said nothing in secret, He told the high priest that witnesses

could testify if He had committed a crime. Jesus had no need to call Peter or John to testify in His behalf, for many people had heard what Jesus taught, and Peter and John could not have added to His defense.

**(John 18:22) When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, “Is that how you answer the high priest?”**

One of the temple police did not like Jesus’ reason for His refusal to answer the questions of the high priest, so he struck Jesus on the face and accused Jesus of not answering the high priest appropriately. As we will learn, the authorities treated Jesus brutally and illegally beginning with His treatment during His trial.

**(John 18:23) Jesus answered, “If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?”**

Though Jesus’ hands were bound, in word and deed Jesus practiced what He taught in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:39, “But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.” Striking someone on the right cheek was meant as an insult. Jesus had spoken rightly, and the one who struck Him had no reason to strike Him, but Jesus’ question could have led the officer to examine himself and repent—we do not know his response to Jesus’ question. No one could truthfully testify to any wrong committed by Jesus during His ministry or during His trial.

**(John 18:24) Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.**

With Jesus’ hands still bound, Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas, who as high priest that year had the legal responsibility to put Jesus on trial and convict Jesus of a crime—a crime that deserved death according to their interpretation of Jewish law. John did not repeat what Matthew recorded about Jesus’ trial before Caiaphas, which can be read in Matthew 26:57-75. In my opinion, the house of Caiaphas and the house of Annas were houses in a large palace or compound, and their large houses shared the same

courtyard. Peter's denial of Jesus seems to be in the same courtyard during the questioning by Annas and the trial by Caiaphas. The Bible does not give us all the details that we would like to know, and it does not answer all our questions, but I believe Caiaphas and some Pharisees were nearby when Annas questioned Jesus; so, Annas simply turned Jesus over to Caiaphas for conviction before they took Jesus to Pilate, for Pilate to sentence Jesus to die by crucifixion as the Old Testament had prophesied and Jesus had foretold.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. Why do you think both Roman soldiers and temple police were sent to arrest of Jesus?
2. Who were the two priests who tried Jesus? Who prophesied about Jesus? What did he prophesy? Was his prophecy true? How do you know?
3. Who do you think was the "another disciple"? Give a reason for your answer. Who did he know that enabled him to stay close to Jesus?
4. How did Jesus speak in the world? What did He say in secret? Why is knowing this important to believers in Jesus?
5. What did Jesus testify to that was wrong that led Him to be struck?

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