



October 8, 2023

“Who’s in Charge Here?”

SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

News:

★ **Wednesday Evenings at Aletheia 6:30-8:00** ★

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JOHN 18:12-23 ~

Jesus was bound...

A Roman Cohort...

The Fortress Antonia...

The High Priest...

Annas, son of Seth...

Joseph, son of Caiaphas...

Jesus was first questioned by _____ the patriarch of the priestly family and considered the highest High Priest. It is an informal hearing intended to get Jesus to _____ Himself and give the court a preview of Jesus’ defense in order to adjust their prosecution. It was _____.

Jesus didn’t _____ like any other prisoner before Him. He was composed and He was confident, and at the same time, He also fully _____ exactly what was going on.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Jesus calmly said, "I have spoken openly to the world... I said nothing in secret."

While it was reasonable, it was also a jab at the _____.

One of the guards _____ Jesus (another illegal act) and _____ called him out on it...

Peter followed Jesus at a distance...

What did John do?

The slave girl at the door queried Peter and Peter said, "Ὁὐκ εἰμί," "Not me."

That's always how it _____. It's not where it typically _____.

Peter had quickly become accustomed to denying Jesus and he easily made his third and most dramatic denunciation yet, just as a _____ began _____ (Luke 22:61&62).

JOHN 18:28-32 ~

The official Passover was about to begin at roughly _____pm that day. This was the official day of Preparation. The entire focus of Passover was the killing of the sacrificial lambs that afternoon at roughly _____pm.

Jesus had a Passover with His guys on what would have been _____ night for us and that's why we Christians call that _____, Maundy _____...

The Roman governor Pontius Pilate came out to the Jews and asked them for a _____. Pilate's annoyance with their answer is obvious.

The Jewish Sanhedrin _____ execute their fellow Jews under certain circumstances, but they couldn't do it on that _____. They needed Roman participation.

Pilate would go on to say three times that he found _____ basis for Jesus' guilt.

How could Jesus be crucified as the ultimate Passover Lamb? Who was orchestrating things?

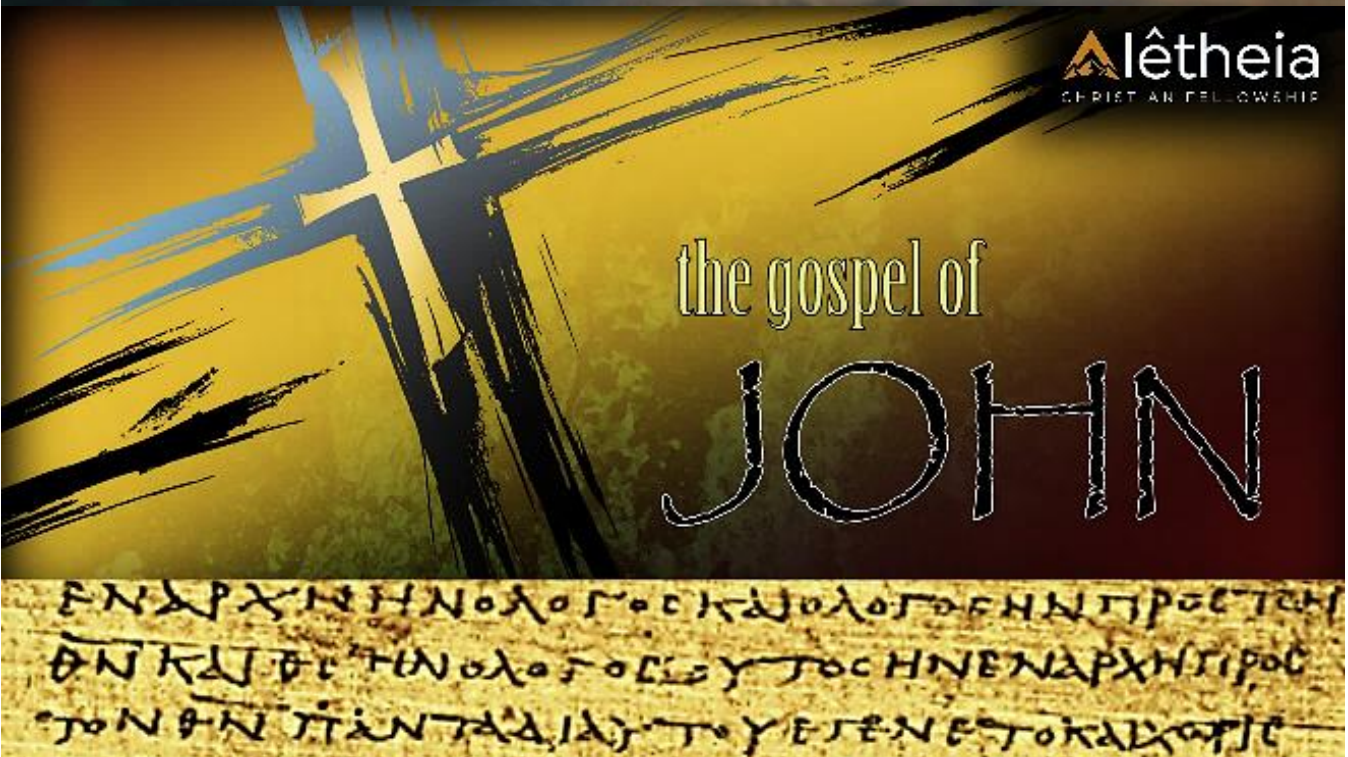
Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____



Lêtheia

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



Last week we saw where Jesus, in complete control of the situation, willingly surrendered Himself to the arresting party.



John 18:12–23, 12So the Roman cohort, the commander, and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him, 13and brought Him to Annas first; for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. 14Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was in their best interest for one man to die in behalf of the people. 15Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, 16but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. 17Then the slave woman who was the doorkeeper said to Peter, “You are

not also one of this Man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." 18Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself. 19The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. 20Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple area, where all the Jews congregate; and I said nothing in secret. 21Why are you asking Me? Ask those who have heard what I spoke to them. Look: these people know what I said." 22But when He said this, one of the officers, who was standing nearby, struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" 23Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" 24So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. 25Now Simon Peter was still standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You are not one of His disciples as well, are you?" He denied it, and said, "I am not." 26One of the slaves of the high priest, who was related to the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" 27Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

Jesus was bound. We know that it was only because He voluntarily submitted to His Father's desire that He be bound for sacrifice. The wording forces a comparison to Isaac being bound for sacrifice by his father. If you are familiar with that incident, you know that Isaac surrendered himself to his father binding him and you know that it was a foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice that the Heavenly Father would actually make. He sacrificed His Own willing, trusting, obedient Son of promise for you and me. That's a love worth celebrating – that's an amazing grace for sure.



A Roman cohort at the time consisted of 480 men led by a commanding officer with the rank of tribune. The Greek equivalent rank, here in verse 12, is translated as “the commander.” It's possible that it was a portion

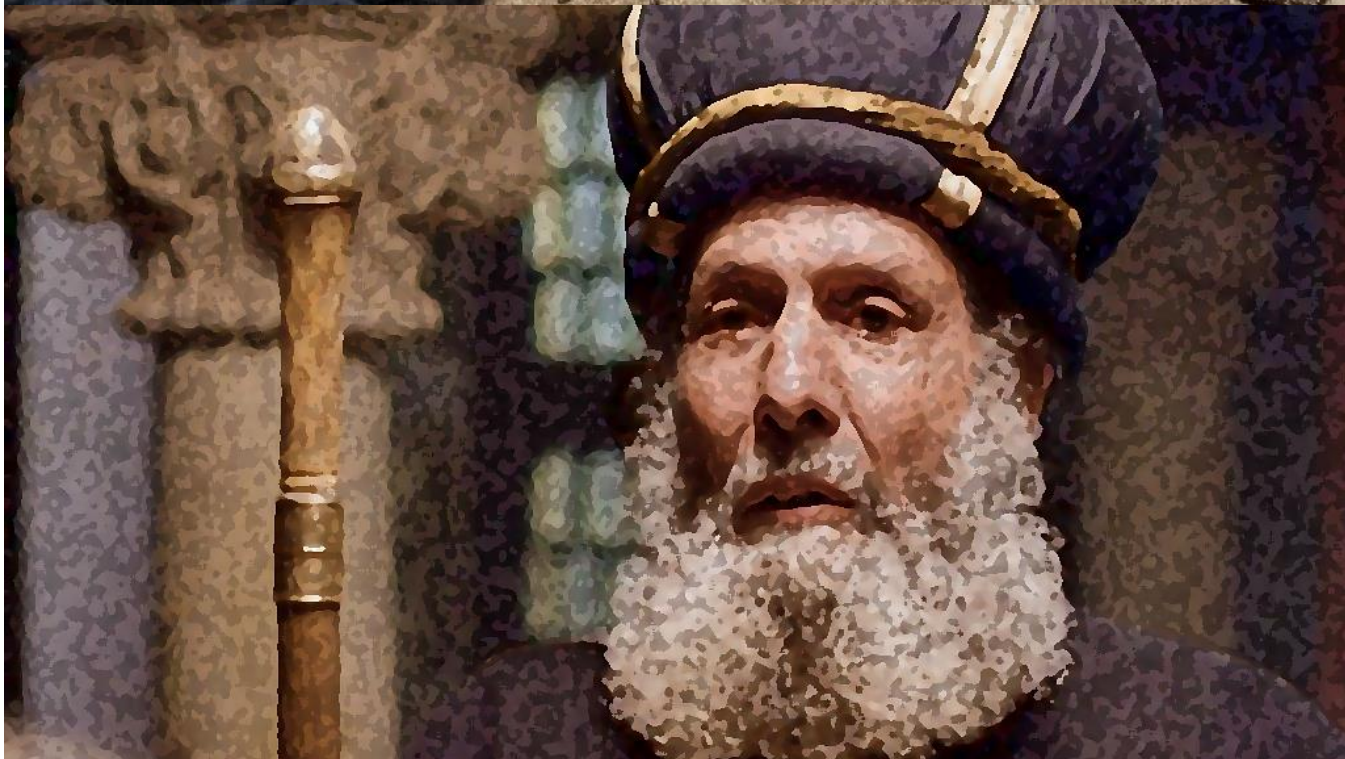
of his cohort that the Tribune brought with him, but why would he bring less to a heavily treed area of steep terrain outside of the city walls at night? As I said last week, if it was less than the standard complement of 480 troops, it was most assuredly more than 100 soldiers or it would have been a century and would have been led by a centurion, not a tribune.

They oversaw the arrest of Jesus by the High Priest's officers and Jewish police. They no doubt led the way back into the city while also providing a rear guard. Once back inside Jerusalem's walls the Romans went back to their base, the fortress Antonia, named after Julius Caesar's friend and Cleopatra's even better friend, Mark Antony. The fortress was attached to the northwest wall of the Temple complex towering over the Temple courts giving the Romans an unobstructed view Inside.



The High Priest's party brought Jesus to the High Priest's home. It was a large complex of courtyards, porches, and various rooms that housed the extended family of Annas, son of Seth, the High Priest under Roman occupation from 6 to 15 A.D.





The Roman procurator, or governor, Valerius Gratus, deposed Annas and then appointed four different dudes over a three-year period culminating with Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas.

The Romans appointed 21 High Priests in the roughly 60 years between 6 and 67 A.D. Annas, five of his sons and his son-in-law Caiaphas accounted for a third of those guys. This family was used to power and worked constantly to hold onto it, and it was no easy task. They functioned very much like a mafia family seen in the movies. There were other leading families vying for power as well. As an example, 7 of the High Priests were from the competing Boethus family. There were others as well contending in the never-ending struggle for power and influence and the wealth that it brought. The families were almost exclusively Sadducees and were self-serving, power-hungry money-grubbers, as was pointed out by Jesus Himself during His ministry.

Caiaphas was appointed by Gratus in 18 and apparently was well tolerated by Pontius Pilate because He kept Caiaphas in power until he returned to Rome in 36, making Caiaphas' 18 year run the longest of any High Priest in the Roman era. Lucius Vitellius finally booted him and installed Caiaphas's brother-in-law, and Annas's son, Jonathan.

According to the Bible the position of High Priest was a lifetime appointment. That's why the New Testament talks about the "High Priests," plural, and why both

Annas and Caiaphas are simultaneously called the High Priest.

Jesus was first questioned by Annas the patriarch of the priestly family and considered the highest High Priest. It is an informal hearing intended to get Jesus to incriminate Himself and give the court a preview of Jesus' defense in order to adjust their prosecution.



It was illegal. Even in those heavily oppressive and systemically hierarchical times, it was illegal to attempt to coerce self-incriminating information out of a defendant. Of course, they did it all the time, but to keep up appearances they generally did it in precisely this way. A suspect was arrested in the middle of the night and brought to a private location for an off-the-

books interrogation under the cover of darkness while the city's people slept all snug in their beds. We think that we invented the practice of extraordinary rendition and that the Russians invented political kidnapping. "There is nothing new under the sun."

In verse 13 we are informed that Jesus was brought to the High Priest Annas first and that his son-in-law Caiaphas was the official High Priest that year. Well as I said he had that position for a total of 18 years. Sure enough, the Greek says, "that year," but it's a saying that means as the NLT renders it, "at that time." It does not mean for "that year" alone. The NLT translates the intent instead of the literal words. Again, pluses and minuses. Either way, the High Priest of verse 19 was Annas by Jewish reckoning and the High Priest of verse 24 was Caiaphas by Roman reckoning.

You'll remember that after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead John 11:47-53 records, 47Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council meeting, and they were saying, "What are we doing in regard to the fact that this man is performing many signs? 48If we let Him go on like this, all the people will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take over both our place and our nation." 49But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year (at that time), said to

them, “You know nothing at all, 50nor are you taking into account that it is in your best interest that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish instead.” 51Now he did not say this on his own, but as he was high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation; 52and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. 53So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

As I mentioned “Chief priests” is the same word translated as High Priest in today’s passage, just plural. Their goal always was to do whatever necessary to keep their power, prestige, and wealth. They felt that Jesus posed an existential threat to all three.

Jumping down to verse 19 of today’s passage we see Annas questioning Jesus first. It was no doubt his privilege as patriarch of the family but was also because a more formal inquisition with Caiaphas was still being assembled. Beyond that Annas was clearly trying to discover what the best case against Jesus might be. Probing for the right narrative and charges that would accomplish their plan to get Rome to do their dirty work for them.

It was important for the Jewish leadership to get Rome to rid them of Jesus because so many of the Jewish people supported Jesus. If the Jewish leaders murdered Jesus, His admirers might start a riot in the city directed against them and their illegal action. That's precisely how you lose your grip on power. Such unrest would require violent Roman intervention to quell, and the governor Pontius Pilate would have likely fired Caiaphas as a result.

On the other hand, if they could get Rome to legally execute Jesus as a political criminal, a riot was far less likely to start and even if it did, the Jewish leaders could play mediator and possibly increase their power. They could even feign sorrow that the Romans killed Jesus and pretend to sympathize with His backers.

So Annas questioned Jesus, exploring the best prosecutorial path forward. Jesus didn't act like any other prisoner before Him. His demeanor was obviously startling to them all. He was composed and He was confident, and at the same time, He also fully understood exactly what was going on.

That was crazy to them. If Jesus understood that this was a kangaroo trial where His fate was already sealed, He should have been terrified, He should have

been promising them that He would change and begging them for another chance.

Instead, when repeatedly asked about His teaching, remarkably Jesus calmly said, “I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple area, where all the Jews congregate; and I said nothing in secret. 21Why are you asking Me? Ask those who have heard what I spoke to them. Look: these people know what I said.”

It is truly an amazing statement and while it was perfectly logical it was also a jab at the High Priest. As we saw earlier the whole affair was illegal. It amounted to kidnapping. Jesus was restrained and taken to a secure location and now He was being interrogated for the purpose of building a better case against Him and all of it informally and privately and under the cover of darkness.

Jesus’ statement started with “I have spoken openly,” and included “I said nothing in secret.” Both were highlighting the closed and secret machinations of the Jewish leadership doing their deeds in the dark because, according to Jesus, they were children of the dark.

One of the guards hit Jesus, which was another illegal act and Jesus called him out on it. That's important for us to understand. Jesus was calm. He never attacked anyone physically or verbally. He was not disrespectful, but He was honest. He was going to go along with what the authorities decided, but He wasn't going to pretend that it was right. It's called self-control. I think we could seek some of that in our own lives. It seems like it just might have something to do with Christian maturity and the Fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Caiaphas, by that time, had assembled his hand-picked group of Jewish leaders representing a quorum of the Sanhedrin, or Jewish Ruling Council. Jesus was led to their location within the same complex of rooms and courtyards.

The story within the story is very unusual. Normally the Gospel writers avoid spending much time talking about what happened away from Jesus. This time it's important to the Gospel. Peter's story must be told, so John placed the information in the midst of what was happening to Jesus. It allows the story to be conveyed in a way that still keeps the overall focus on Jesus.



Peter followed Jesus at a distance and people often say that therein lies his downfall. Had Peter followed Jesus closely he might have died, but he would not have denied. It's a contrived oversimplification that preaches well enough because the basic point is certainly true.

Your personal closeness with Christ is your personal closeness with Him. You might need to think about that for a bit. What I'm saying is that as a Christian the degree to which you are tight with Jesus is inversely proportional to the degree to which you repudiate Him.

Okay let me say it an easier way... All Christians are both focused on themselves, and they are focused on

Jesus. The focus on Jesus requires denying yourself and the focus on yourself requires denying Jesus. You actively deny Jesus to the exact degree that you are focused on you.

Maybe an example... Take a person who is in constant close connection with Jesus. They devote time each day to Jesus and Jesus alone. They have a sacred period where they pray, praise, and worship God. They are in-tune with the indwelling Holy Spirit and are always in close contact with that reality. They are thinking about Jesus at all times carrying on an internal dialogue with Him throughout the day. Such a person is unlikely to think things, let alone say things, let alone do things that negatively impact Jesus and His mission.

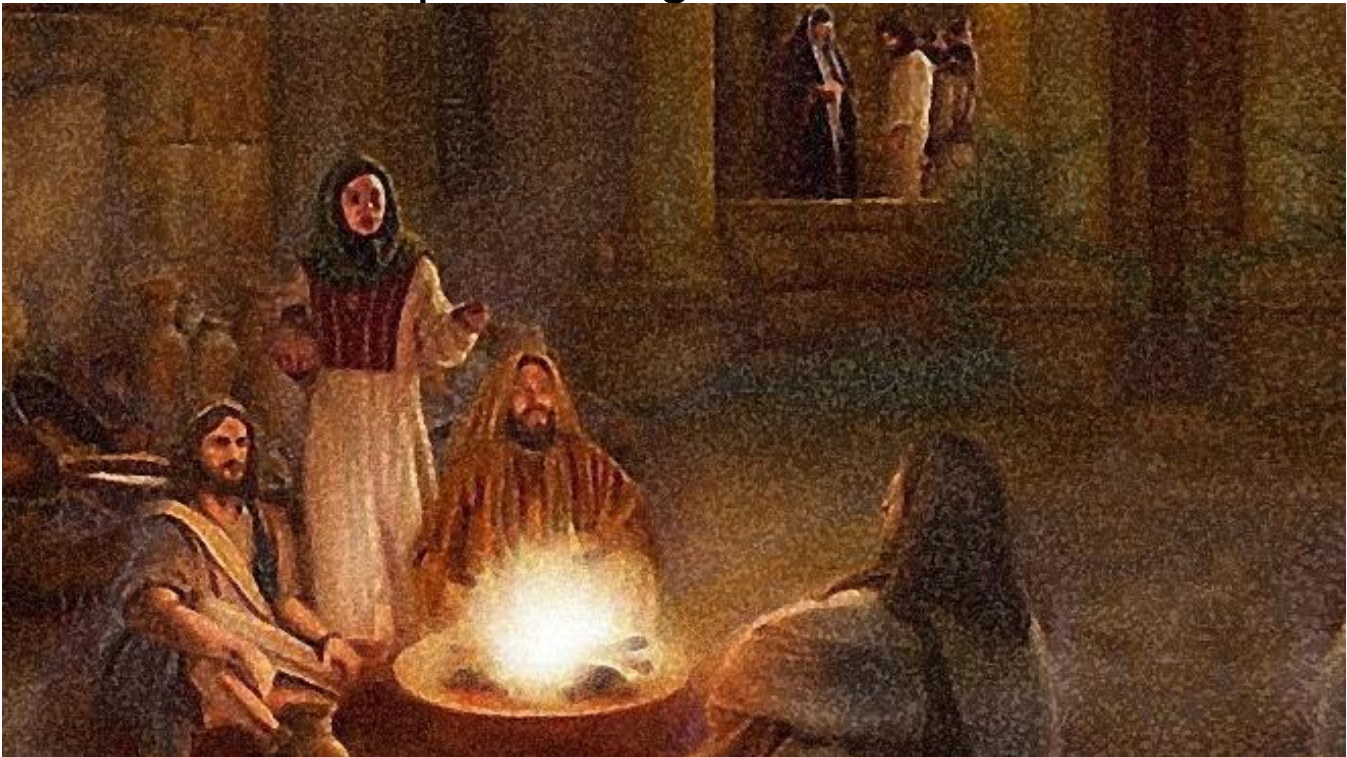
Take another Christian. Let's say that they pray a few times a day, but as they are doing other things and so without much focus. Let's say that they are busy and heavily involved with the things of this world. Let's acknowledge that they are distracted. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not too far away, but certainly nowhere near the forefront of this person's thinking. Compared to the other person, what are the odds that this person will think, say, and even do things that negatively impact Christ and His church?

Peter followed at a distance both physically and metaphorically, but he did follow. It's quite remarkable that he did because he was just severely chastised by Jesus for the umpteenth time. "Put your sword away childish man. Can't you get it through your thick head that I'm going to obey My Father and become the final perfect sacrificial Lamb? Can't you put aside your arrogant unwillingness to accept that?"

Yet Peter, without the indwelling Holy Spirit, still followed. Why would Jesus put so much trust in Peter by putting him in charge of His early church? It's easy to see Peter as the guy always messing things up but look at John. The author of this Gospel was also following at a distance. He was in the room with Jesus. What did he do? Nothing. His denial of Jesus was every bit as real as Peter's, just far less dramatic.

There are sins of commission, but never forget, my friends, that sins of omission are just as deadly. Fail to share the Gospel when you have an opening. Fail to stand with Jesus when you are challenged. Fail to support the church when you have the resources. Fail to take up the cause of the weak. Fail to pray, to assemble with the saints, to be humbly grateful, generous, and faithful, and you are sinning by omission just like the Apostle John did that same night.

John was well known to the High Priest's family. It shouldn't be a surprise or a questionable detail. It was only 80 miles as the crow flies from John's front door to the High Priest's palatial complex and people constantly made the journey between the two areas. It's likely that John was related to the High Priest directly, or indirectly, through blood, or through marriage. It's also possible that his father Zebedee was well known to the High Priest as a wealthy businessman representing Galilee.



John got Peter in the door, but in doing so the slave girl at the door queried him. It was her job to assess those entering. The question is stated negatively - "You are not." With the addition of the word "also" it loses its

negative aspect in Greek, but not in English. All that to say, that she was not accusing Peter, she was just trying to figure out his reason for being there.

Peter immediately denied it with two tiny words “Οὐκ εἰμί,” essentially, “Not me.” It was a quick off the cuff remark that I’m sure meant very little to Peter at the time. I’m sure that right after saying it Peter regretted it but just as quickly rationalized it away as merely brushing off the slave girl’s intrusive question. No big deal - his status was none of her business.

That’s always how it starts. It’s the whole frog in the boiling water metaphor. Humans rarely jump into the deep end of the pool the first time they go swimming. Deny Jesus just a little bit to save some awkwardness and you’ve put yourself on the path to greater denial.

Well, true to the principle, Peter’s second denial is much stronger and made far more publicly. He probably was finding it difficult to watch the interrogation of Jesus and wanted some air. Well, it was the coldest part of the night in early spring and so Peter stood by the fire with several others.

Kind of a bold move when you consider that he had just hacked off the ear of one of their own. He likely

had a hood pulled over his head and around his face and thought that that along with the low firelight would be enough to conceal his identity. Peter denied Jesus while standing beside a charcoal fire and he would shortly find himself standing next to another charcoal fire explaining himself face-to-face with the Risen Lord Jesus.

One of the slaves was related to the slave Malchus. He was probably standing right next to him during Jesus' arrest and would have had a front row seat to Peter's brutal attack. He accused him directly "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" Peter had, in very short time, become quite accustomed to denying Jesus by this point and he easily made his third and most dramatic denunciation yet, just as Jesus had perfectly predicted.



At that instant, a rooster began crowing. Imagine what went through Peter's mind. Imagine what went through his heart. Luke 22:61&62 records, "At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Suddenly, the Lord's words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me." And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly." The morning of a new day was dawning in Jerusalem – the single-most important day in human history.



John 18:28–32, 28 Then they brought Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter the Praetorium, so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. 29 Therefore Pilate came out to them and said, “What accusation are you bringing against this Man?” 30 They answered and said to him, “If this Man were not a criminal, we would not have handed Him over to you.” 31 So Pilate said to them, “Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law.” The Jews said to him, “We are not permitted to put anyone to death.” 32 This happened so that the word of Jesus which He said, indicating what kind of death He was going to die, would be fulfilled.

It's very important to understand that for the Sadducean High Priests and therefore for the priests in the Temple and therefore as the official position of Judaism at the time, the Passover was about to begin at roughly 6 pm that day. They could not go into a Gentile place and be ritually pure enough to partake in the meal. This was the official day of Preparation. The entire focus of Passover was the killing of the sacrificial lambs that afternoon at roughly 3 pm.

Those lambs died in place of the Jewish people. According to God the Jews were to take the sacrificial lambs to their homes and immediately cook them for the Passover, or Seder, meal that would begin roughly 3 hours later, which was the start of the Passover day by Jewish reckoning.

It is confusing to people because Jesus had held a Passover with his disciples the previous evening which would have been the start of the Day of Preparation, not the start of the Passover for the Sadducees. That Meal that we know as the Last Supper corresponded to a different calendar than the one the Sadducees used. Perhaps it was the calendar of the Pharisees or the Essenes, but in any case, it was legitimized as a reasonable substitute evening because the priests

could not physically sacrifice enough lambs for everyone to celebrate Passover on the same night.

Jesus had a Passover with His guys on what would have been Thursday night for us and the beginning of Friday for them. That's why we Christians call the Thursday in Passion Week, Maundy Thursday. Maundy is from Latin Mandatum meaning Command. Jesus gave us the Commandment "mandating" that Christians love one another. He demonstrated the concept by washing the Apostle's feet.

Jesus was arrested, tried, tortured, executed, and hastily buried before 6 pm Friday. It was the official Day of Preparation, meaning that the Sadducean official Passover was a Great Passover that year, meaning that the sacred event happened to fall on Saturday, making it a Great Sabbath. John will confirm that in the next chapter. All four Gospels agree on this. Jesus was tried, tortured, executed, and buried on Friday the preparation day for the overlapping Passover and Sabbath.

Jumping ahead of ourselves a bit let me just say that, whether Jesus' disciples saw Friday as the correct Passover or not is irrelevant, they still could not do

anything regarding His body until Sunday morning because it was also a Sabbath day.

That Saturday evening after 6 pm was technically Sunday and so the ladies were then free to begin their preparations to anoint Jesus' body but couldn't go into a graveyard in the dark at night, so they waited until first light, which was Sunday morning. It is why we Christians gather on Sunday.

Jesus was dead at around 3 pm on Friday, He was dead on Saturday, and He was dead until about 6 am on Sunday. Three days according to the reckoning of the Jews. The Sign of Jonah was fulfilled. "Three days and Three nights," is a colloquial saying meaning utterly dead. It was never meant to be a literal 72-hour-long period of time. It was simply that after three days dead there was no coming back and yet...



The Roman governor Pontius Pirate... I mean Pilate... came out to the Jews and asked them for a charge. After hours of haranguing Jesus, they hadn't come up with anything reasonable and so they said that the proof that Jesus was guilty was the very fact that they handed Him over.

They were essentially saying that they had the wisdom and authority to declare Jesus condemned to death without a sentencing, without a verdict, without a trial, and even without a formal charge and because of their splendid magnificence the governor should quit questioning them and simply carry out their wishes.

Pilate's annoyance is palpable, He retorted, since you can sentence a man to death without a charge, certainly you can carry out his punishment as well. The Jew's reply reveals their agenda. They want Jesus dead, but they want Rome to do their dirty work for them.

Technically the Jewish Sanhedrin could execute their fellow Jews under certain circumstances like we see in the Book of Acts with the stoning of Stephen. In addition, everyone knew that they assassinated their foes as we see them attempt to do later on in Acts with their conspiracy to murder the Apostle Paul. What the Jews were saying to Pilate was that they could not execute Jesus because of the present week-long religious festival culminating with Passover night. "It is not lawful," refers to what is forbidden to Jews by their interpretation of the law of Moses.

Their real agenda was to permanently get rid of Jesus and at the same time be innocent of His blood. They wanted Rome to execute Him as a political criminal, thereby freeing them of responsibility. This is how you make sense of verse 32, "This happened so that the word of Jesus which He said, indicating what kind of death He was going to die, would be fulfilled." Jesus had repeatedly stated that He would be crucified.



Only the Roman governor could make that happen. While the Jews could have eventually framed Jesus with blasphemy charges and had Him stoned or they could have simply hired men to assassinate Him. Neither would fulfill prophecy, but because they had Jesus now and they couldn't do either now they needed Roman participation.

Pilate would go on to say three separate times that he found no basis for Jesus' guilt. The Jewish leaders couldn't kill Jesus at that time, and neither could Rome without a charge. But Jesus had said that He would be crucified as the ultimate Passover Lamb. Who was orchestrating things?



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