

Men's Sunday Night Live
Lesson 19 - John 18:1-40
Finding Identity and Purpose
Guilt and Grace in the Garden

Jesus left the place of prayer for His meeting with His enemies. He deliberately meets Judas and his band, for He knew what was about to happen. Jesus always knew what He would do, for He always knew the will of the Father.

In using the sword, Peter was definitely disobeying Jesus. Jesus does not need our protection; the weapons we are to use to fight Satan are spiritual ones. Peter used the wrong weapon, had the wrong motive, acted under the wrong orders, and accomplished the wrong result!

Much has been written about the illegal aspects of Jesus's trial. It was held at night; the prisoner was assumed to be guilty and treated that way; the court hired false witnesses; the judge permitted the prisoner to be mistreated while bound; the court allowed the accused no defense. After the secret night trial, the crafty religious leaders led Jesus to Pilate for the final death sentence. They would not enter a Gentile's hall, lest they "*should be defiled,*" but they did not hesitate to condemn an innocent man to death! At least seven times Pilate went from the hall to the Jews outside, trying to work out a compromise. Pilate crucified Jesus because he was a coward, "*willing to content the people*" (Mark 15:15). How many sinners will be in hell because they feared people and sought to please them!

Pilate's question, "What is truth?" has been asked by philosophers for ages. In 14:6, Jesus says, "*I am the truth.*" John 17:17 says, "*Your Word is truth.*" First John 5:6 says "*the Spirit is truth.*" The Spirit and the Word point to Jesus, the Truth.

The world makes the wrong choice when it comes to spiritual matters. The mob preferred a murderer to the Prince of Life. They chose the lawbreaker, not the Lawgiver. The Jews rejected their true Messiah, but they one day will accept Satan's false Messiah, the Antichrist. Men reject Jesus for different reasons. Judas rejected Jesus because he listened to the devil; Pilate listened to the world; Herod obeyed the flesh. "*You have a custom,*" said Pilate. How sad that Pilate knew the religious customs, but did not know Jesus! Everyone must make a choice.

Read John 18:1-40 and answer the following questions

1. What was Judas' part in Jesus' betrayal? Why did the priests need someone to betray Jesus?

2. What details about the betrayal by Judas does John leave out of his account? (See Matthew 26:47-49; Mark 14:43-45; Luke 22:47-48)

3. What does the fact that the Romans sent soldiers to help apprehend Jesus show about their involvement?

4. What does verse 4 tell us about the heart of Jesus?

5. When the soldier explained that they are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, what does Jesus tell them?

6. What do you think might have been going through the minds of the mob when Jesus asked them a second time "*Whom are you seeking?*" (See 18:7)

7. Peter takes out his sword and cuts off Malchus' ear. What do you see here about Peter's character?

8. How does Jesus respond to Peter's bold act? (See John 18:11; Luke 22:51; Matthew 26:52-56)

9. What can we learn from Peter's denials? Why do you think Peter denied Christ even though he was committed to Him?

10. What is the Praetorium? Why wouldn't the Jewish leaders enter it? (See 18:28)

11. Why did the Jews not want to judge Jesus themselves? How did this fit into prophecy?

12. What do we learn about Jesus' kingdom from verses 36-37?

13. What do verses 39-40 say about the Jews who called on Pilate?

The Blessing of a Clean Conscience

Would you feel free to welcome others to attempt to assassinate your character? Would you even help them? Jesus did. He had such a clean conscience and a secure trust in God that justice would ultimately prevail, and that His enemies could do no lasting harm, that He actually aided His accusers. He welcomed them, identified Himself for them, and even protected them from retaliation by His own loyalists. Jesus demonstrated grace in the face of hostility.

Jesus' innocence did not protect Him from suffering pain, or death. It actually gave Him a confidence rooted in a larger reality than life on earth. Because He answered to God's judgement, He was free to suffer, even unjustly. He left justice up to God and did not resort to retaliation.