SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES




DEEP DIVE

# John

## *Chapter Eighteen, Verses 1–40*

*The Cup, the Fire and the King — the arrest in the garden, the denials by the fire, and the King of truth before Pilate*

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

From the garden across the Kidron to the high priest's courtyard to the Praetorium at dawn, John shows one Man in full command of His own arrest — while His friend warms himself by the enemy's fire and a Roman governor stands face to face with the Truth and walks away. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind John's key words.

THE PASSAGE

**John 18:1–40**

*garden · fire · Praetorium*

THE METHOD

**Verse by Verse**

*Color-coded by teacher*

WHAT'S INSIDE

# Contents

*Three movements through the longest night*


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| — | **How to Read This Study** · *the four voices & their colors* | 3 |
| — | **Before the Passage** · *from the Kidron to the Praetorium* | 3 |
| I | **"I Am He"** · *John 18:1–11 · the garden and the cup* | 5 |
| II | **One Stood, One Fell** · *John 18:12–27 · Annas and the fire* | 6 |
| III | **A King Not of This World** · *John 18:28–40 · the King of truth* | 9 |
| IV | **The Passage in the Whole Bible** · *cross-references* | 11 |
| † | **At a Glance** · *the four voices side by side* | 13 |
| † | **Key Insights & Questions for the Table** · *discussion* | 13 |
| † | **Sources** · *where each voice comes from* | 15 |




*"the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" — John 18:11*

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

# John 18:1–40

*The Cup, the Fire and the King — Jesus says "I am He" and the soldiers fall; Peter says "I am not" by a charcoal fire; Pilate asks, "What is truth?"*

## † How to Read This Study

This study walks John 18 in 3 movements, in John's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where John is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · JOHN 18:37

"Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that △ I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, ▯ to testify to the truth. ☆ Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.""

## † Before the Passage

John 17 ended with Jesus' prayer: "I in them" (17:26). Chapter 18 begins, "When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron" (18:1). The Upper Room is behind them; it is the night of Passover week, the city is crowded with pilgrims, and the Roman garrison is on alert. Within a few hours Jesus will be arrested, questioned by Annas, sent bound to Caiaphas, and handed to Pilate "early" (v. 28). John skips much of what Matthew, Mark and Luke record (the agony in Gethsemane, the Sanhedrin hearing) and adds what they leave out: the soldiers falling at "I am He," Malchus' name, Annas, and the long conversation with Pilate about kingdom and truth.

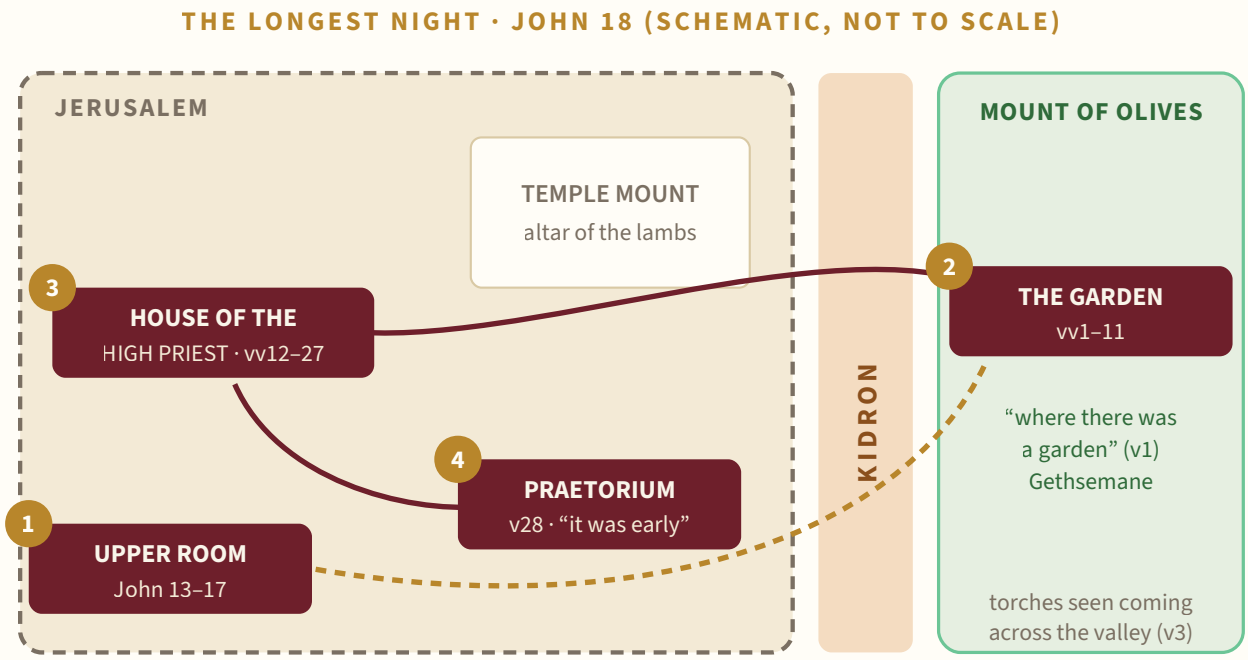
The Kidron is the valley east of Jerusalem between the temple mount and the Mount of Olives. It has history. A thousand years earlier King David, betrayed by his trusted counselor Ahithophel and fleeing his son

Absalom, “passed over the brook Kidron” weeping (2 Samuel 15:23). Now the Son of David crosses it, betrayed by a man who ate His bread (13:18). Guzik notes that in Passover week the Kidron carried the run-off from the temple altar, red with the blood of the lambs. John alone tells us there was a garden there; the first Adam fell in a garden, and Henry notes, “In the garden of Eden sin began; there the curse was pronounced.”

The cast is large. Judas comes with “the Roman cohort” (*speira*, up to six hundred men at full strength, though a detachment may be meant) and the temple “officers” sent by the chief priests and Pharisees (v. 3). Annas had been high priest from A.D. 6 to 15 and remained the power behind the office; five of his sons and his son-in-law Caiaphas held it after him. Caiaphas was “high priest that year” (v. 13) — the man who had said “it is expedient for you that one man die for the people” (11:50). Pontius Pilate was the Roman prefect of Judea (A.D. 26–36), normally resident at Caesarea but in Jerusalem for the feast, and only he could order an execution (v. 31).

Watch two men through the chapter. Three times Jesus says “I am He” (vv. 5, 6, 8) and armed men fall to the ground; three times Peter is asked about Jesus and the answer is “I am not” (vv. 17, 25) and a denial (v. 27). Jesus stands before the highest authorities of Israel and Rome and tells the truth; Peter stands before a doorkeeper girl and lies. The chapter ends with the crowd choosing a robber over the King — and the innocent One going to the death that the guilty man deserved.

FIGURE · THE ROUTE OF THE NIGHT




*Follow the numbers: from the Upper Room across the Kidron to the garden, back into the city to the high priest’s house, and at dawn to the Praetorium.*

I
MOVEMENT

JOHN 18:1–11

## “I Am He”

*The garden across the Kidron — the soldiers fall, the disciples go free, and Jesus takes the cup*

1 *When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples* *over the ravine of the Kidron*, *where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples.* 2 *Now Judas also,* *who was betraying Him*, *knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples.* 3 *Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there* *with lanterns and torches and weapons*. 4 *So Jesus,* *knowing all the things that were coming upon Him*, *went forth and said to them, “Whom do you seek?”* 5 *They answered Him, “Jesus the Nazarene.” He said to them, “* *I am He*.” *And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them.* 6 *So when He said to them, “* *I am He*,” *they drew back and fell to the ground*. 7 *Therefore He again asked them, “Whom do you seek?” And they said, “Jesus the Nazarene.”* 8 *Jesus answered, “I told you that* *I am He*; *so if you seek Me,* *let these go their way*,” 9 *to fulfill the word which He spoke, “* *Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one*.” 10 *Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s slave, and* *cut off his right ear*; *and the slave’s name was Malchus.* 11 *So Jesus said to Peter, “* *Put the sword into the sheath*; *the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?”*

JOHN 18:1–11

*“While all the country was weeping with a loud voice, all the people passed over. The king also passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over toward the way of the wilderness.”*

2 SAMUEL 15:23

*“When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.”*

PSALM 27:2

### ἐγώ εἰμι

EGŌ EIMI · “I AM HE” · G1473, G1510

The Greek is just two words, “I am”; the NASB adds “He” in italics. On a lawn at night it can mean simply “I’m the one,” but John has trained his readers to hear more: “before Abraham was born, I am” (8:58), “unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (8:24), and in 13:19, “so that … you may believe that I am He.” This is the language of Isaiah 43:10 in the Septuagint, “that you may know and believe Me … that I am” (*egō eimi*). When He says it, the arresting party “drew back and fell to the ground.” John does not explain; he simply shows that no one takes Jesus’ life from Him — He lays it down (10:18).

### σπεῖρα · τὸ ποτήριον

SPEIRA · TO POTĒRION · "COHORT" · "THE CUP" · G4686, G4221

*Speira* is the Roman cohort, a tenth of a legion — about six hundred men at full strength, though the word was also used of a smaller detachment. Either way, Rome and the temple came out in force with "lanterns and torches and weapons" to arrest a teacher with eleven unarmed men and two swords. Against that, Jesus speaks of *to potērion*, "the cup." In the prophets the cup is God's wrath poured out for sinners to drink (Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15). John records no Gethsemane agony; here the prayer has already been answered, and Jesus calls it "the cup which the Father has given Me."

**DAVID GUZIK** · Enduring Word

Guzik sees Jesus in command from the first verse: "Jesus' entire life was prepared for this hour, and He was ready for it." The Kidron, red with the run-off of the Passover lambs, reminded Him of the sacrifice ahead, and Judas' huge armed party shows how badly he misjudged his Master. In "I am" he hears the divine name: "There was such a display of divine presence, majesty, and power in those two words." The fall proves the surrender was voluntary — "With God's power expressed through His words alone, Jesus could have overpowered them and easily escaped." Peter's sword is poor courage: "It is entirely possible that Peter deliberately chose a non-soldier, and attacked him from behind."

**C.H. SPURGEON** · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In "The Captive Saviour Freeing His People" Spurgeon stresses that Jesus went to meet His captors: "He went willingly, for since a single word made the captors fall to the ground, another would have sent them into the tomb." "There was no power on earth that could have bound Him had He been unwilling." Verse 8 is substitution in miniature — he puts it in Christ's mouth: "Dost thou seek Me? Here I am; but let these, for whom I stood, go their way." And he looks beneath the soldiers to the real cause: "The true seizure of Christ was not by Romans, but by our sins." Those who would have Christ must let some things go.

**MATTHEW HENRY** · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry pictures the scene as a battle where the champion steps out first: "Our Lord Jesus, like a bold champion, takes the field first." He crosses the Kidron, "the brook of suffering in the way to his glory and our salvation," and enters a garden, because "In the garden of Eden sin began; there the curse was pronounced." At His word the soldiers fall "like men thunder-struck," and "Christ was declared to be more than a man." Peter's stroke was zeal without warrant: "Thus, while he seemed to fight for Christ, he fought against him." The Lord answers with submission to His Father's cup.

II
MOVEMENT

JOHN 18:12–27

## One Stood, One Fell

*Jesus bound before Annas — and Peter warming himself by the enemy's fire*

12 *So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him,* 13 *and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.* 14 *Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.* 15 *Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest,* 16 *but 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.* [17] *Then the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."* [18] *Now 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.* [19] *The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching.* [20] *Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret.* [21] *"Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said."* [22] *When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?"* [23] *Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?"* [24] *So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.* [25] *Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it, and said, "I am not."* [26] *One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"* [27] *Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.*
>
> JOHN 18:12–27

> *"nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish."*
>
> JOHN 11:50

FIGURE · "I AM HE" AND "I AM NOT"

| JESUS: "I AM HE" — in the garden, before armed men | PETER: "I AM NOT" — in the courtyard, before slaves |
|---|---|
| **v5** "Whom do you seek?" … "I am He." | **v17** To the slave-girl at the door: "I am not." |
| **v6** They drew back and fell to the ground. | **v25** By the charcoal fire: "I am not." |
| **v8** "I told you that I am He; … let these go." | **v27** To Malchus' relative: denied again. |
| **He gives Himself up** so that "I lost not one" (v9) and drinks the Father's cup (v11) | **"immediately a rooster crowed" (v27)** just as foretold (13:38) — but restored at another charcoal fire (21:9, 15–17) |

*Read across each row: the same night, two men, three answers each — the Shepherd gives Himself for His sheep while His sheep denies Him.*

## ἀνθρακιά

ANTHRAKIA · "A CHARCOAL FIRE" · G439

A heap of glowing coals (our "anthracite"). The word appears only twice in the New Testament: here, where Peter stands warming himself with the slaves and officers (v. 18), and in John 21:9, where the risen Jesus has "a charcoal fire already laid" on the shore of Galilee and then asks Peter three times, "Do you love Me?" (21:15–17). John chooses the same rare word on purpose. The smell of a charcoal fire was where Peter failed, and it is where Jesus restored him.

## ἠρνήσατο · ῥάπισμα

ĒRNĒSATO · RHAPISMA · "HE DENIED" · "A BLOW" · G720, G4475

*Arneomai* is to say "no" to someone — to disown, refuse to acknowledge. It is the word Jesus used when He warned, "a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times" (13:38). Peter's denials in John are short, two words in Greek: *ouk eimi*, "I am not" — the exact opposite of Jesus' *egō eimi*. Meanwhile, inside, an officer "struck Jesus" — *edōken rhapisma*, "gave a blow," usually a slap with the open hand, possibly with a rod. The word appears only three times (Mark 14:65; John 18:22; 19:3), all of blows on Jesus.

**DAVID GUZIK** · Enduring Word

Guzik explains the real power of Annas: "Annas was not the official High Priest but as father-in-law to Caiaphas, he was the one who put Caiaphas in office." Jesus' answer ("Question those who have heard") is an appeal to lawful procedure the hearing was ignoring, and the slap begins everything that follows: "This anonymous official began the physical abuse of Jesus that would end in His crucifixion." Outside, Peter warms himself because it is cold and because he wants to blend in, and the first denial at the door comes easily. Guzik is careful in his verdict: "We could say that at this point it was not the faith of Peter that failed, but his courage."

**R.C. SPROUL** · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "The Midnight Trial" (from *Holy Week*) Sproul begins with the darkness: "There is no darkness in heaven because darkness is the context preferred by the wicked." "It was inappropriate, improper, and illegal for a capital trial to be carried out at night," but "Pilate would hold court only in the mornings, so all their business had to be done that night." "But in the minds of the Jews, Annas was still the leading authority, and they went to him first." Jesus' reply, Sproul paraphrases, meant: "I teach where there are a multitude of witnesses. Where are your witnesses?" On Peter, a Ligonier devotional quotes his John commentary: Jesus "had no need to die for people who are sinless, for there are no such people."

**C.H. SPURGEON** · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "The Greatest Trial on Record" (1863) follows Jesus from Annas to Caiaphas — he takes the high priest who questions Him in verse 19 to be Caiaphas, where Guzik and Sproul read Annas. Asked about His disciples, Jesus says nothing against them, "Because it is not for our Advocate to accuse his disciples. … Let Satan slander, but Christ pleads." Asked about His doctrine, "Truth is never shamefaced; he boldly points to his public life as his best answer." Of the blow: "This smiting while under trial is peculiarly atrocious." Elsewhere, on Peter's fall (v. 27), he warns, "Backslide a little and you are on the way to utter apostasy."

**MATTHEW HENRY** · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry notes that Caiaphas' old counsel, that "it was expedient that one man should die for the people," shows both the malice of the court and the innocence of the prisoner. Then he follows Peter step by step down the slope — a distance, a door, a fire, bad company: "It is ill warming ourselves with those with whom we are in danger of burning ourselves." He does not mock Peter's love, for "Those that truly love and value Christ will follow him all weathers and all ways," but he grieves the fall: "It is a sad story, and none of the least of Christ's sufferings."

III
MOVEMENT

JOHN 18:28–40

## A King Not of This World

*Clean hands, dirty hearts — the King of truth before Pilate, and a robber set free*

28 *Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter*
*into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.* 29 *Therefore Pilate went out*
*to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?"* 30 *They answered and said to him, "If this*
*Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him 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 *to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.*
33 *Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the*
*King of the Jews?"* 34 *Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about*
*Me?"* 35 *Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me;*
*what have You done?"* 36 *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world,*
*then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not*
*of this realm."* 37 *Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I*
*am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth.*
*Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."* 38 *Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said*
*this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him.* 39 *"But you have a custom that I*
*release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?"* 40 *So*
*they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.*

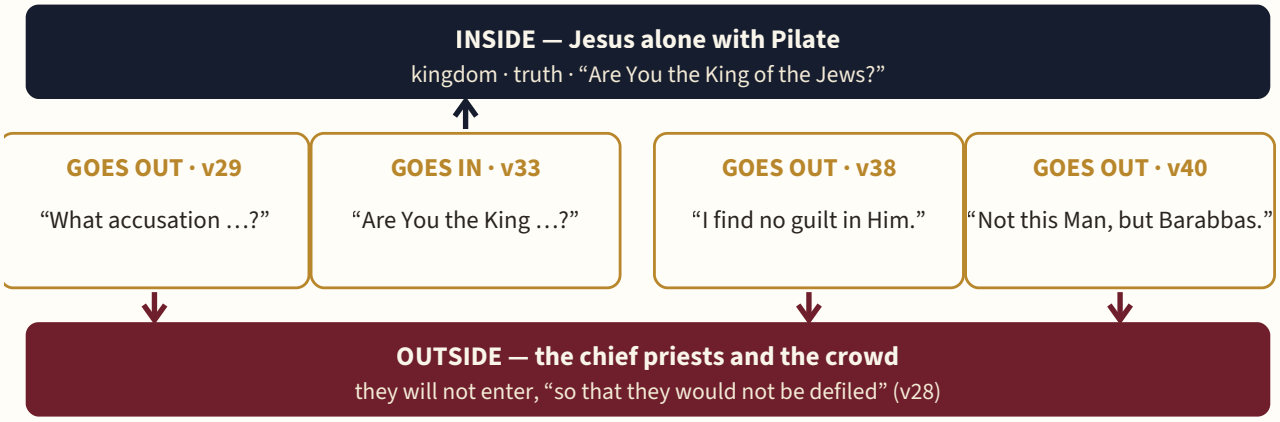
JOHN 18:28–40

*"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.*

JOHN 12:32–33

FIGURE · PILATE BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

**PILATE IN AND OUT OF THE PRAETORIUM · JOHN 18:28–40**




*The accusers stay outside to stay clean; Pilate shuttles between them and the prisoner inside — and the scene keeps moving into chapter 19.*

## πραιτώριον · ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου

PRAITŌRION · "MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD" · G4232, G932

*Praitōrion* is a Latin loanword, the governor's headquarters — in Jerusalem probably Herod's palace or the Antonia fortress. The leaders will not go in "so that they would not be defiled," yet they are arranging a murder. Inside, Jesus says His *basileia* (kingdom, reign) is not *ek tou kosmou toutou* — not "out of" this world. The preposition is about source, not location: His kingdom does not come from here or advance by the world's means ("My servants would be fighting"). It is "not of this realm" — *ouk enteuthen*, "not from here." It comes from heaven, and Daniel 7:14 says when it comes it will fill the earth and never pass away.

## ἀλήθεια · λῃστής

ALĒTHEIA · LĒSTĒS · "TRUTH" · "ROBBER" · G225, G3027

*Alētheia* is reality as it truly is, unhidden. Jesus came "to testify to the truth," and has said, "I am … the truth" (14:6); Pilate, face to face with Truth in person, asks "What is truth?" and walks out without waiting for an answer. Then John's last line is four words in Greek: *ēn de ho Barabbas lēstēs*. A *lēstēs* is not a sneak thief (*kleptēs*) but a bandit who takes by violence; Josephus uses the word for armed insurgents, and Mark 15:7 says Barabbas had committed murder in the insurrection. Jesus had used the same word of those who come to the sheep as robbers (10:1, 8).

**DAVID GUZIK** · Enduring Word

Guzik points to the irony of verse 28: "They refused to break relatively small commands regarding ceremonial defilement" while handing an innocent man over to death. Pilate was a hard and ruthless governor, yet he found Jesus innocent. Jesus' kingdom is "not of this world" because it comes from heaven and rests on peace rather than armies or rivalry with Rome. On "What is truth?" he writes, "Probably, Pilate did not mean that there was no truth" — more a weary shrug — and adds, "Many in our day ask Pilate's question, but from a different perspective." And Barabbas is the gospel in a picture: "The cross Jesus hung upon was probably originally intended for Barabbas."

**R.C. SPROUL** · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "Midnight Trial" explains why the leaders hurried: Roman court sat in the morning, so the night's work had to be done before Pilate took his seat — "it was early" (v. 28). On verse 36 a Ligonier devotional quotes his John commentary: Jesus "did not say that His dominion and authority did not include this world," nor that His realm was "a transcendent spiritual Neverland." The kingdom is not from here and does not advance by the sword, but it rules over every kingdom here. And Sproul would not let Pilate's question stand as sophistication: "It is impossible to be a Christian and not care about the truth."

**C.H. SPURGEON** · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In "Jesus, the King of Truth" (v. 37) Spurgeon admires the calm courage of the confession: "He had no ambition for the gewgaws of human sovereignty." "His kingdom was not of this world, nor to be sustained by force," and "Jesus would scorn to reign by the help of a lie." "Truth spoken may be defeated, but truth acted out in the life of a man is omnipotent." In "Barabbas Preferred to Jesus" (1864, v. 40) he sees the substitution: "Barabbas must die or Christ must die," and "He dies that we may be delivered." Then he presses the choice on every hearer: "There are no neuters; there are no betweenites."

**MATTHEW HENRY** · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry calls the priests' scruple what Jesus called the Pharisees': "They strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel." Their admission that they could not execute anyone fulfilled Christ's word about the manner of His death — "No word of Christ shall fall to the ground." Pilate should have seen that "he did not set up a temporal kingdom in opposition to the Roman power": "Its nature is not worldly; it is a kingdom within men," and "its weapons are spiritual." "Truth is that pearl of great price which the human understanding has a desire for," yet Pilate would not wait for it. And the crowd's cry for Barabbas is the pattern of every heart: "Thus those do who prefer their sins before Christ."

IV
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

## The Passage in the Whole Bible

*From David at the Kidron to the Son of Man's everlasting kingdom*

> *"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth."*
>
> ISAIAH 53:7

> *"And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed."*
>
> DANIEL 7:14

> *"The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly."*
>
> LUKE 22:61–62

> *"So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread."*
>
> JOHN 21:9

> *"I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate,"*
>
> 1 TIMOTHY 6:13

> *"and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;"*
>
> 1 PETER 2:23

**C.H. SPURGEON** · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon reads the officer's blow in light of Micah 5:1, where Israel's Judge is struck on the cheek with a rod, and he sets the Lord's gentleness beside Paul's sharp answer when he was struck (Acts 23:3).

**MATTHEW HENRY** · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry sees the second Adam entering a garden to undo the first: "In the garden of Eden sin began; there the curse was pronounced."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

# At a Glance

*Four voices, one chapter*

Four teachers, one night. Guzik walks the scenes and their irony; Sproul (from his Holy Week book and quoted commentary — no transcript of his John 18 sermons is online) presses the illegality of the trial and the reach of Christ's kingdom; Spurgeon preaches substitution from the garden to Barabbas; Henry draws the Puritan lessons, especially from Peter's slide. They differ on small things — whether Annas or Caiaphas questioned Jesus in v. 19 — and agree that Jesus was never more in control than when He was bound.

| THE MOVEMENT | GUZIK · the text | SPROUL · the doctrine | SPURGEON · the heart | HENRY · the counsel |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I · I am He** | Ready for the hour; two words of divine power; Peter chose a non-soldier. | — (no Sproul text on these verses was available) | A word felled them, another would have entombed them; let these go — for whom I stood. | A bold champion takes the field; Eden's garden undone; fought against Him while fighting for Him. |
| **II · Annas and the fire** | Annas the power behind the office; not Peter's faith but his courage failed. | Darkness preferred by the wicked; an illegal night trial; where are your witnesses? | Our Advocate will not accuse His disciples; truth is never shamefaced. | Ill warming ourselves where we may burn; a sad story. |
| **III · The King of truth** | Strict on defilement, easy on murder; the cross meant for Barabbas. | Not a spiritual Neverland — His dominion includes this world. | No ambition for the gewgaws of sovereignty; Barabbas or Christ must die. | Strained at a gnat; a kingdom within men; preferring sin before Christ. |

JOHN 18:1–40 · A COMPARATIVE READING

## † Key Insights to Carry

- **The prisoner is in charge.** Jesus knows "all the things that were coming upon Him," goes out to meet the soldiers, asks the questions, sets the terms for His men's release, and chooses the cup. Spurgeon: "There was no power on earth that could have bound Him had He been unwilling." SPURGEON
- **"I am" knocks armed men down.** *Egō eimi* — the words of 8:58 and Isaiah 43:10. Guzik: "There was such a display of divine presence, majesty, and power in those two words." THE GREEK
- **He is taken so they can go.** "If you seek Me, let these go their way" (v. 8) — and John says it fulfilled "I lost not one" (v. 9). The arrest is a picture of the cross: the Shepherd is seized, the sheep walk free. THE TEXT
- **The cup came from the Father.** Not from Judas, Caiaphas or Pilate. In the prophets the cup is God's wrath (Isa 51:17); Jesus drinks it as a gift from His Father's hand (v. 11). THE TEXT
- **"I am He" against "I am not."** Jesus' *egō eimi* (vv. 5, 6, 8) and Peter's *ouk eimi* (vv. 17, 25) are set side by side on purpose. Guzik: "it was not the faith of Peter that failed, but his courage." GUZIK
- **Watch where you warm yourself.** Henry: "It is ill warming ourselves with those with whom we are in danger of burning ourselves." Peter's fall came by steps — a distance, a door, a fire, the wrong company. HENRY
- **The fire returns.** *Anthrakia* appears only here and at 21:9. Where Peter denied Him three times, Jesus later lit another charcoal fire and asked him three times, "Do you love Me?" THE GREEK
- **A night trial in the dark.** Sproul: "It was inappropriate, improper, and illegal for a capital trial to be carried out at night." Jesus, slapped for telling the truth, asks only for witnesses (v. 23). SPROUL

- **Religious scruples, murderous hearts.** They would not enter a Gentile building "so that they would not be defiled" — while arranging the death of the Lamb they were about to celebrate. Henry: "They strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel." HENRY
- **The robber went free.** "Now Barabbas was a robber." Guzik: "The cross Jesus hung upon was probably originally intended for Barabbas." Every believer is Barabbas. GUZIK

## † Questions for the Table

**1** **Jesus walked toward the torches knowing everything that was coming (v. 4). What am I avoiding this week that I need to walk toward, trusting the Father?**

Knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, He went forth.

18:4; Heb 12:2

**2** **Peter grabbed a sword when Jesus wanted him to trust. Where am I fighting in my own strength — with my temper, my mouth, my hands — instead of trusting God's plan?**

"Put the sword into the sheath." Zeal without warrant fights against Christ.

18:10–11; Matt 26:52

**3** **Jesus was arrested so His men could go free (vv. 8–9). How does it change me to see myself as one of "these" who walked away free?**

The Shepherd is seized; the sheep walk free.

18:8–9; Isa 53:5–6

**4** **Peter's denial started with standing by the wrong fire with the wrong crowd. What "fire" am I warming myself by that puts me in danger?**

Henry: ill warming ourselves where we may burn.

18:18, 25; Ps 1:1

**5** **Peter failed three times and was restored at another charcoal fire. What failure do I need to bring back to Jesus instead of hiding?**

The same rare word, *anthrakia*: where he fell, he was restored.

18:27; 21:9, 15–17

**6** **Pilate asked "What is truth?" and walked away. When truth gets close and personal, how do I walk away — and what would listening to His voice look like?**

"Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

18:37–38; John 14:6

*John 18 shows the Son of God bound, slapped and bargained away — and never once out of control. He gave Himself up so His men could go free, He drank the Father's cup, and He told the truth to men who did not want it. The robber walked out of prison that morning, and if you are in Christ, so did you.*

*Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ*

## † Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.


- Guzik, Enduring Word Commentary, John 18 — https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/john-18/
- Sproul, "The Midnight Trial" (Ligonier article, 3 Apr 2026, from Holy Week: The Week That Changed the World) — https://learn.ligonier.org/articles/the-midnight-trial
- Ligonier devotional "Simon Peter Denies Jesus" (7 Nov 2018) — quotes Sproul's commentary John — https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/simon-peter-denies-jesus
- Ligonier devotional "Christ's Otherworldly Kingdom" (9 Nov 2018) — quotes Sproul's commentary John — https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/christs-otherworldly-kingdom
- Sproul, "How concerned should we be for the lack of truth taught in the church?" (Ask R.C., Jan 2014) — https://learn.ligonier.org/qas/how-concerned-should-we-be-for-the-lack-of-truth-taught-in-the-church
- Ligonier Scripture index, John 18 (Sproul sermons July–Aug 2003 — audio only, not used for quotations) — https://learn.ligonier.org/scripture/john-18
- Spurgeon, "The Captive Saviour Freeing His People" (John 18:1–14) — https://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/spurgeon/the_captive_saviour_freeing_his_people.htm
- Spurgeon, "The Greatest Trial on Record" (Ps 2:2, No. 495, 22 Feb 1863) — https://biblehub.com/library/spurgeon/spurgeons_sermons_volume_9_1863/the_greatest_trial_on_record.htm
- Spurgeon, "Backsliding Must be Checked At its Beginnings" (John 18:27, excerpt) — https://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/spurgeon/backsliding_must_be_checked_at_its_beginnings.htm
- Spurgeon, "Jesus, the King of Truth" (John 18:37) — https://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/spurgeon/jesus_the_king_of_truth.htm
- Spurgeon, "Barabbas Preferred to Jesus" (John 18:40, 16 Oct 1864, MTP 10) — https://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/barabbas-preferred-to-jesus
- Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible, John 18 — https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/john/18.html
- NASB 1995 — 2 Samuel 15:23 — https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Samuel%2015%3A23&version=NASB1995
- NASB 1995 — Psalm 27:2 — https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2027%3A2&version=NASB1995
- NASB 1995 — Isaiah 53:7 — https://biblehub.com/isaiah/53-7.htm
- NASB 1995 — 1 Timothy 6:13 — https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Timothy%206%3A13&version=NASB1995
- NASB 1995 — 1 Peter 2:23 — https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%202%3A23&version=NASB1995
- NASB 1995 — Daniel 7:14 and Luke 22:61–62 (local NASB95 JSON) — https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%207%3A14&version=NASB1995
- Strong's G2748 Κεδρών — https://biblehub.com/greek/2748.htm
- Strong's G4686 σπεῖρα — https://biblehub.com/greek/4686.htm
- Strong's G1510 εἰμί — https://biblehub.com/greek/1510.htm
- Strong's G4221 ποτήριον — https://biblehub.com/greek/4221.htm
- Strong's G439 ἀνθρακιά — https://biblehub.com/greek/439.htm
- Strong's G720 ἀρνέομαι — https://biblehub.com/greek/720.htm
- Strong's G4475 ῥάπισμα — https://biblehub.com/greek/4475.htm
- Strong's G4232 πραιτώριον — https://biblehub.com/greek/4232.htm
- Strong's G932 βασιλεία — https://biblehub.com/greek/932.htm
- Strong's G225 ἀλήθεια — https://biblehub.com/greek/225.htm
- Strong's G3027 λῃστής — https://biblehub.com/greek/3027.htm


Scripture: New American Standard Bible® (NASB), © 1960–1995 The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Greek: SBL Greek New Testament; Strong's numbers per biblehub.com. · Smith For Christ Publishing · Ed Smith