

John 18:1-40

Down through the centuries, God had spoken

"unto the fathers by the prophets."

And then, after 400 years of silence, He

spoke to His people once again **"by his
Son."**

As John 1:14 tells us " --- **the Word was**

**made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we
beheld his glory, the glory as of the
only begotten of the Father,) full of
grace and truth."**

Yes, Jesus Christ is God's ultimate Prophet.

He is also God's ultimate Priest and King.

At His first coming, His Messiah ship was

rejected and set aside for a time, but
not His high-priestly ministry.

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No, just as the Old Testament priests had been responsible to teach the people, Jesus had proclaimed and explained the Word of God.

And just as the Old Testament priests had prayed for the people, so Jesus had prayed for Israel.

But the most important responsibility of Old Testament priests was to offer up sacrifices on the behalf of the people.

That evening, as He walked to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was to embark upon this final and essential ministry.

Yes, He would offer the ultimate sacrifice, of which all others were only a foreshadowing.

As Isaiah 53:10 foretold, He would **"make his soul an offering for sin."**

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And this is where we find Him as we begin

John 18:1: **"When Jesus had spoken these words** (that is, the words of His high priestly prayer, recorded in chapter 17) **he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples."**

If that brook could talk, it would tell you that this wasn't the first time a rejected King of Israel had passed over its waters.

Many years ago, King David had crossed this very same brook while fleeing the wrath of his son.

But unlike David, the Greater Son of David was not fleeing.

No, He was heading for a very familiar place, a garden where He knew Judas would have no trouble finding Him.

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It was in a garden that Adam plunged the human race into sin.

It would be from a garden that the Second Adam would go forth to redeem mankind.

Yes, it had come full circle --- **"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."** 1 Corinthians 15:22

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Continuing in John 18:2 **"And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples."**

This garden was one of Jesus' favorite places.

Yes, even in its fallen condition, it continued to show forth the genius of His handiwork.

And once again it would provide a quiet refuge in which the Son of God could pour out His petitions before His Heavenly Father.

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Unlike the other gospels, the book of John doesn't record Jesus' prayer.

There's a good reason for that.

You see, each of the gospels is designed by the Holy Spirit to portray a certain aspect of Jesus' character or ministry.

In the book of John, it is Christ's deity that is emphasized.

And certainly in the chapter before us His power, as God incarnate, shines forth.

But His prayer is not recorded.

However, if I may, I would like to include
Jesus' prayer in this lesson.

To do this, we will turn to Matthew 26:36-44

**"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a
place called Gethsemane, and saith unto
the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go
and pray yonder.**

**37: And he took with him Peter and the
two sons of Zebedee, and began to be
sorrowful and very heavy.**

**38: Then saith he unto them, My soul is
exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:
tarry ye here, and watch with me.**

**39: And he went a little further, and
fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O
my Father, if it be possible, let this
cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I
will, but as thou wilt.**

40: And he cometh unto the disciples,

and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

41: Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

42: He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

43: And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

44: And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words."

Certainly crucifixion is a most agonizing death.

It would be enough to make any man shudder.

But in Jesus' case, it was your sin and mine, not the physical suffering, which bore down with awful force upon His sinless nature.

Because Jesus would be made "**sin for us,**" He knew that for the first time in His eternal existence He would be separated from His Heavenly Father.

The contemplation of that awful separation simply lacerated His soul --- "**O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.**"

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Have our sins so alienated us from God, that reconciliation must demand such a price?

Isn't there some other way?

Well, Jesus has already asked that question

**"--- if it be possible, let this cup
pass from me:"**

But it wasn't possible.

God knew it, and Jesus knew it.

That's why He immediately concluded His

request with the words **"nevertheless
not as I will, but as thou wilt."**

And it was God's will.

Yes, **"God so loved the world, that he gave
his only begotten Son, that whosoever
believeth in him should not perish, but
have everlasting life."**

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Well, Jesus had prayed His way through the
crisis and had gotten the victory, but
the disciples had slept.

They would be facing their own crisis, and
Jesus had admonished them to pray ---

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

However, they had taken refuge in sleep rather than prayer, and now the opportunity was over.

Matthew 26:45-46 **"Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46: Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."**

There seems to be a bit of a disconnect between V 45 and V 46.

Surely Jesus wouldn't say **"Sleep on now, and take your rest,"** and with His very next breath say **"Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."**

We might have made such a blunder, for we
can't see beyond the point of our nose,
but Jesus is never taken by surprise.

No, if Jesus said --- "**Sleep on now, and
take your rest,**" there must have been
time to do so.

Yes, there must have been an unrecorded time
of unknown duration tucked in between V
45 and V 46.

Perhaps it was too sacred to be shared.

While the disciples slept, the Lamb of God
must have stood in the moonlight with
those great drops of sweat still
glistening on His brow.

The struggle was over, and He was ready for
the next step.

He had fought the battle on His knees, and
He had won the victory.

Yes, He would be **"obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."**

I can almost hear His Heavenly Father saying once again-- **"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."**

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Returning to John 18:3 we read --- **"Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons."**

In the Gospel of Matthew, this **"band of men"** is described as **"a great multitude."**

Why would they need **"a great multitude"** to apprehend a single individual with only 11 followers?

Actually, I don't think their precautions were entirely unwarranted.

By this time, they knew they had been
unsuccessful on a couple of occasions
when they tried to stone Him.

He had simply walked away while they stood
there helpless.

And even though they would never admit it,
His mighty works must have made quite
an impression upon them.

No, this time they were taking no chances,
or were they?

If Jesus had actually wanted to oppose them,
He had 12 legions of angels at His
command.

But He had no thought of resisting arrest.

And unlike the first Adam who had hidden
himself "**amongst the trees of the
garden,**" Jesus had no intention of
evading them.

As a matter of fact, He went out to meet them.

V 4-6 **"Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?**
5: They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.
6: As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground."

Can you imagine the clatter of their weapons as this **"great multitude"** literally collapsed before Him?

The words **"I am"** that had so affected them occur 9 times in the book of John, and always indicate Deity.

Yes, there was mighty power in those words!

V 7-9 "Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.
8: Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:
9: That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none."

Referring, of course, to the words He had spoken that very night in His high priestly prayer --- "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost ---."

Yes, even in the face of this multitude, the Good Shepherd's only concern was for His sheep.

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V 10 **"Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus."**

First of all, I must commend Peter for his bravery, but not for his wisdom.

As was often the case, Peter seemed to be completely oblivious to His Master's agenda.

Yes, at the precise moment when Jesus had obtained safe conduct for His disciples, Peter came out swinging.

Jesus' reaction was immediate --- **"Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"**

And in Matthew 26: 53-54, we find Him adding these words --- **"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he**

**shall presently give me more than
twelve legions of angels?**

**54: But how then shall the scriptures
be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"**

No, Peter had never been good at following
his Master's lead.

On that very evening, he had objected to
Jesus' attempt to wash his feet.

He had slept when Jesus asked him to pray.

And now, he had put the disciples in
imminent danger by his misguided
actions.

Yes, he was doing his own thing.

And before the night was over, he would go
one step too far.

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V 12 **"Then the band and the captain and
officers of the Jews took Jesus, and
bound him --."**

I can almost see those "**twelve legions of angels**" drawing their swords in anticipation of their Master's command. But it never came.

And unlike Peter, they stood there motionless.

I wonder what their thoughts were as they saw their Master roughly bound before their very eyes.

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In Psalm 118:27, referring to the brazen altar, we find the words "--- **bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.**"

No, it wasn't the ropes which had been tightly knotted around Jesus' wrists which bound Him.

It was His love to do His Father's will ---

**"the cup which my Father hath given me,
shall I not drink it?"**

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V 12-14 **"Then the band and the captain and
officers of the Jews took Jesus, and
bound him,**

**13: And led him away to Annas first;
for he was father in law to Caiaphas,
which was the high priest that same
year.**

**14: Now Caiaphas was he, which gave
counsel to the Jews, that it was
expedient that one man should die for
the people."**

First, He was taken to Annas for judgment,
and then quickly hustled off to **"the
palace of the high priest."**

No, there was no time for sleep that night.

They must do all they could before the sun was up and the populace was awake.

How well Jesus had spoken of them when He said **"--- this is your hour, and the power of darkness."**

And it was also the power of lawlessness.

Before they were through, they would break seven legal points contained in their own rabbinical law.

I will only mention one of them because it is so apparent here.

In the case of a capital offense, it was required that the trial should only be conducted during the daylight hours.

And even then, if the person was found guilty of death, the sentencing must be delayed until the next day.

That would leave time for reflection and a possible change of mind.

But, no, they must rush it through, and
there was no possibility of a change of
mind.

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And then we must consider the judges.

First of all, Jesus was brought before
Annas.

Annas wasn't even the high priest, having
been removed from that position several
years before.

However, he was still a considerable force,
exercising his influence through his
family.

For instance, V 13 tells us that his son-in-
law Caiaphas was the high priest that
same year.

Also, Annas had five sons and a grandson who
would eventually become the high
priest.

So you see, it was very much a family affair, and it was also a predetermined affair.

As V 14 reminds us, Caiaphas had already made it clear --- **"that it was expedient that one man should die for the people."**

Yes, it was all about expediency, not righteous judgment.

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The scene now shifts to Peter who was following the crowd at a safe distance. No doubt he had fled with the rest of the disciples, but then he remembered his promise --- **"Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended."**

V 15-16 **"And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple**

was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

16: But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter."

Yes, Peter accepted the invitation.

Perhaps he could get close enough to see how things would go without being detected.

V 17 "Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not."

There went his promise to "**never be offended**" because of Jesus.

Yes, that first lie should have warned him that he was getting in over his head.

V 18 **"And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself."**

Be careful Peter! The world's fire might provide some momentary comfort, but in the end, you will get badly burned.

Yes, Peter would have done well to heed the words of Psalm 1:1 **"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."**

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V 19 **"The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine."**

Yes, they asked Him about His disciples.

If they were fishing for names, they were about to be disappointed.

Jesus was a recognized teacher in Israel, and it should have been accepted that He would have legitimate disciples to teach.

No, Jesus wasn't some revolutionary with a band of unruly followers that needed to be rounded up.

And, in any case, the Good Shepherd was not about to throw His sheep to the wolves.

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Also they asked him about His doctrine.

Here again, their questioning was out of order, for they already knew what His teachings were.

Jesus pointed that out in V 20-23 "---- **I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the**

temple, whither the Jews always resort;
and in secret have I said nothing.

21: Why askest thou me? ask them which
heard me, what I have said unto them:
behold, they know what I said.

22: And when he had thus spoken, one of
the officers which stood by struck
Jesus with the palm of his hand,
saying, Answerest thou the high priest
so?

23: Jesus answered him, If I have
spoken evil, bear witness of the evil:
but if well, why smitest thou me?"

Yes, that man should have been ashamed of
himself.

To strike a man who had his hands bound was
nothing more than cowardly.

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V 24-25 **"Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.**

25: And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not."

By this time I think the walls were closing in on Peter.

No doubt he had been close enough to hear that question about Jesus' disciples, and it must have made him nervous.

And no doubt he had also heard that blow, and saw Jesus' head snap back with the force of it.

And just when he was beginning to panic, someone recognized him.

Yes, **"One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see**

thee in the garden with him?

27: Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew."

Poor Peter!

He had lied his way into the "**palace of the high priest**, and now he was doing his best to lie his way out.

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V 28 "**Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.**"

In preparation for Passover, they had meticulously removed all leaven from their homes, but apparently not from their hearts.

Yes, Jesus' criticism had been well founded when He said, they **"strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."**

V 29 **"Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?"**

Surprisingly, Pilate was willing to accommodate their scruples.

But, in return, their rather foolish remark made it abundantly clear that they considered him to be nothing more than a rubber stamp to endorse their decision **"--- If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee."**

In that very moment, they lost Pilate's cooperation.

V 31 **"--- Take ye him, and judge him according to your law."**

And with that remark, he quickly put an end to their arrogance --- **"The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:"**

Consequently, Jesus must be executed by crucifixion rather than stoning.

V 32 **"That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die."**

And not only had He foretold the manner of His death, but He had pointed out its significance --- **"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."**

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At His birth, God had used the power of Rome to bring His Son to Bethlehem, thus fulfilling scripture.

Once again, Rome would be used to fulfill
prophecy concerning His death.

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On two occasions, the Jews had tried to
stone Jesus, but He had simply walked
away.

No, this was a situation that required the
power of Rome.

However, they knew their charge of blasphemy
wouldn't stand up in a Roman court.

No, they must invent something else that
Pilate would take seriously.

Their trumped up charges are recorded in
Luke 23:1-2 **"And the whole multitude of
them arose, and led him unto Pilate.
2: And they began to accuse him,
saying, We found this fellow perverting
the nation, and forbidding to give**

tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King."

A King of the Jews! Now that was a serious matter.

John 18:33 **"Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?"**

On his own, I don't think Pilate would have ever asked such a question.

Jesus had been up all night, and obviously He had been beaten.

No, the man standing before him didn't look very much like a king.

That's probably why Jesus said in V 34 ---

"Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?"

V 35-36 **"Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have**

delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

36: Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

That was an excellent piece of reasoning, wasn't it?

If Jesus had an army of sufficient force to concern Pilate, He wouldn't have been there in the first place.

However, He was a King, and any one of His **"twelve legions of angels"** could have overthrown the entire Roman army single-handedly.

V 37 **"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou**

sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Notice Jesus' careful choice of words.

Yes, as the Son of Man, He had been born in Bethlehem to become Israel's King.

But as the Eternal One, He had simply come into the world to **"bear witness unto the truth."**

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Pilate brushed it all off with the words

"What is truth?"

Actually, he had asked a good question, but he didn't wait for the answer.

No, his interests were purely political, and by this time he was convinced that this man wasn't any threat to Rome.

V 38 **"--- And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all."**

If Pilate had been interested in justice, that would have settled the matter.

An innocent man must be released.

But instead, we find him saying, in V 39

"But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?"

I think he was somewhat concerned by the fact that he was bargaining with an innocent man's life, but he was much more concerned with the possible political repercussions that this situation might have on his career.

So he hit upon a plan to avoid his responsibility.

Surely if he gave them a choice between an innocent man and a notorious criminal, they would release Jesus.

But he had misjudged his opponents.

V 40 **"Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber."**

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I'm sure the Jews were well aware of the fact that Barabbas **"was a robber."**

He had repeatedly broken the eighth commandment.

And if he were returned to society, no doubt he would continue to plunder the very people they were supposed to protect.

However, it was a small price to pay.

At least he wouldn't rob them of Moses' seat, or threaten their jealously held traditions.

Yes, the choice was clear --- **"Not this man,
but Barabbas."**

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Now, sin is also a robber.

It robs you of your inner peace, your
health, and can even rob you of your
place in heaven.

And in the end, we must all face Pilate's
question: Will it be Christ, or
Barabbas?