

This is Jesus

John 18: The Trials

- We saw last week that when Jesus and the disciples were partaking of the last supper, they were doing so celebrating The Passover.
 - This is the largest national holiday for the Jewish people
 - At this time there was normally a population of about 400,000 that lived within Jerusalem...but during Passover, scholars believe there would be about 2.5 million people in town for the celebration
 - Now, this was a big holiday, but it was also normally a time of tension and unrest
 - Why? Because, what are they celebrating during the Passover? Mainly, the Exodus from Egypt.
 - They're celebrating their History of when God delivered them from being ruled by a foreign nation...This Holiday is all about Freedom!
- Now this would lead to unrest because their celebrating freedom WHILE being ruled by a foreign nation
 - Therefore the Roman Empire needed to up their security during this time because they would need to squash any rebellions or insurrections that might arise
 - Now within this time of tension, Jesus had already been stirring the pot
 - Jesus had publicly called out the religious leaders for their hypocrisy and greed. He had turned over tables in the temple, He raised a guy from the dead, rode into town on a donkey, He is publicly calling for people to come to repentance and to believe in Him, all kinds of things
 - We see at the end of chapter 11 that the religious leaders are plotting to find a way to get rid of Jesus.
 - ***“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country***

to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? That He will not come to the feast at all?” Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest Him.” -John 11:55-57 (ESV)

- And they finally found a way to get Him, in Luke’s Gospel, we’re told detail about how Judas went to the religious leaders and agreed to find a way to get Jesus into their custody, for the right price, whenever no one else was around.
- Meanwhile, we see later in the chapter, After Jesus and His disciples had eaten the last supper, they make their way to the Mount of Olives.
- Along the way the disciples are just arguing among themselves about who’s the greatest and who should have the highest positions

whenever Jesus ushers in this New Kingdom. They don’t have a care in the world.

- They’re so comfortable that when they get to the Mount of Olives, and Jesus goes off to pray, and they just go to sleep.
- And at one point Jesus wakes them up, saying, “Why are you sleeping?! Get up and pray so you won’t enter into temptation...”
- Then at that moment they hear some commotion off in the distance. They look and see a dim glow, its flickering is getting brighter and brighter and they can tell that it’s the glow from torches.
- Then they hear the footsteps get louder and louder and louder to the point that it sounds like marching.
- Before they know it they are surrounded by this heavily armed crowd.
- There were some of the most prominent religious figures among them, there were highly

trained Temple Guards with clubs and swords, and Judas, their friend, is leading them.

- John 18:3 says ***“So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.”***

-John 18:3 (ESV)

- Band: A military cohort (600 troops)
- So they felt the need to send a squadron of 600 soldiers to arrest one Man who only had 11 guys with Him as back up?
- Well their concerns were valid because John goes on to tell us what happened when they tried to arrest Him.

- ***“Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to Him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” They answered Him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I am He.” ... When Jesus said to them, “I Am He,” they drew back and fell to the ground.” -John 18:4-6 (ESV)***

- So there is some speculation as to what that really means, “They drew back and fell to the ground.”
- But if you go back to the original language and break down this verse phrase by phrase, it could literally be translated:
 - *“When Jesus said to them, “I Am He, “The were sent off flying back and thrust into the earth.”*
- Now that would have been sight to see! 600 troops being knocked off of their feet by the power of Jesus merely saying three words
- No doubt that’s why Peter was full of so much confidence that even though they were outnumbered 50 to 1, He still felt comfortable pulling out his sword to fight them...wouldn’t you??
- ***“Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear.” -John 18:10 (ESV)***

- Now I guarantee you, Peter was not aiming for the ear. He's a fisherman, not a soldier, probably not the most coordinated individual... but he's confident because He's on Jesus side, you almost got to applaud his faith!
- But then to the disciples absolute surprise, Jesus rebukes Peter, put the guys ear back on his head and then.... just let's Himself be arrested
- And this is when the panic sets in.... and Matthew 26 says this is when they left Jesus and fled
- ***“So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him.” -John 18:12 (ESV)***
- At this scene I can't help but picture **the poster for the movie Man of Steel** that came out in 2016.
 - Before the movie had been seen by anyone, one blogger took notice of the poster and one caption said *“Putting Superman in*

handcuffs seems a bit silly as new “Man of Steel” poster arrives.”

- But that's exactly who Jesus is here in this passage, He's superman in handcuffs. Impossible to take by force, but willingly surrenders. And what we're about to see, in the span of 5 and a half hours, is Jesus go through 6 different trials.
- And we're going to pull not just from the book of John, but all of the Gospel's to get a full picture of what Jesus went through on the night He was betrayed.
- ***“First they led Him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.” -John 18:13 (ESV)***
- **TRIAL #1: ANNAS (2am)**
- A couple of things to note about Annas first:
 - Annas was not THE high priest at this time but he had been before
- Annas is still very much a major player with a lot of influence.

- First off, he is the father-in-law of the current high priest...and the way this all goes down makes it seem like Annas may not be the face of the operation but he's like the puppet master pulling the strings from the background
- Also, he is still very involved in the Temple administration. In fact, his main revenue stream came from the Temple vendors. Whatever was sold at the Temple, he got a cut
- And you remember what Jesus did to the Temple vendors?
- Jesus actually did this twice, we read about that in John chapter 2 right after He turned water into wine, Jesus made His way over to Jerusalem for Passover week, and cleared out the Temple vendors who were blatantly ripping people off.
- Now three years later, it's Passover week again and Luke tells us that Jesus comes back into town, sees the vendors, once again, doing the

same thing, so He does the same thing! Flips the tables and drives them out!

- So not only is Jesus disrupting Temple business, He's hitting Annas, one of the most powerful and influential religious leaders alive, right in the wallet...DURING what was supposed to be the most profitable week of the year!
- So Annas already has a personal vendetta against Jesus, and before He faces anyone else, Annas wants Jesus brought to him.
- In verse 19 of John 18 it says, "***The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples and His teaching.***" -***John 18:19 (ESV)***
- This exact tactic is what a lot of people use in order to try and disprove or discount Jesus.
 - They don't examine, Jesus, all that He is and all that He claims to be...they investigate the people who claim to follow Him, find flaws in

them, and then use that to discount His teaching

- This argument is never going to go away. Even one of Ghandi's most famous quotes comes from whenever he was asked what the greatest hindrance to Christianity was, he said, "Christians."
- And there's truth to that, and we should use that as motivation to be the best, most faithful followers of Christ that we can possibly be
- However, no matter how good we try to be, people will always accuse us of being hypocrites.
 - Why? Because we are flawed, broken, sinful, human beings trying to represent a Perfect God. And whenever we choose to follow Jesus, we don't automatically get it all together!
 - We spend the rest of our lives in the slow process of maturation where we do

everything we can to be just a little more like Him every single day.

- But what sets us apart, is that we have the Hope of Eternity where one day all of the brokenness and hurt of this world will one day be wiped away
 - But at this point, RIGHT NOW, We're not perfect... we never will be,
 - But the purpose of our lives is not to BE PERFECT, but to Know the PERFECT ONE, and Grow in Him more every day.
- However, for those who keep Jesus on trial in their lives, whenever they start with His disciples for opening arguments against Him... well they'll be able to twist that case however they want.
- Just like Annas was doing. First he questions Jesus' disciples, and for example: Let's imagine he used Peter as his argument. He could have said...

- “So, I heard that this Peter, is known to be your right hand man. And sure you teach about peace, and love, and respecting authority...but yet your right hand man, not 1 hour ago, cuts off a man’s ear??”
 - “Tell me what kind of teacher are You, that You breed that kind of violence into your followers??”
- So sure, you can twist the story that way....IF you start with Peter.
- BUT if you start with Jesus you see a supernatural show of power that no one had seen before whenever they came to arrest them. He rebuked Peter sharply and then immediately rights Peter’s wrong, by healing the man.
 - And even though He was powerful enough to knock a mob to the ground by speaking, and even though He was powerful enough, loving enough and caring enough to heal the man’s ear! He still allowed Himself to be arrested peacefully.
- The narrative completely changes whenever you start with Jesus.
- You will always miss out on the beauty of who Jesus is, if you judge Him based upon the immature actions of His people
 - How many people give up on God, church, Christianity in general because of bad experiences that they’ve had with Christian people??
 - But if you really want to know who Jesus is, the life that He offers, and that He expects from His people...start with Him, His teaching, His Spirit, not the broken, flawed, individuals that follow Him. You will ALWAYS be able to find something wrong with us
 - But I believe with all of my being you will NEVER find anything wrong with Jesus
- So Jesus answers Annas in verse 20, **“I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said**

nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said.” When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, “Is that how you answer the high priest?” Jesus answered him, “If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike Me?” Annas then sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.” -John 18:20-24 (ESV)

- Now we see Jesus being taken to His second trial:
- **TRIAL #2: Caiaphas (3:30am)**
- Now, in Mark's account we get more details about this trial, and in Mark 14 we see
- ***“Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against***

Him, but their testimony did not agree.”

-Mark 14:55-56 (ESV)

- Now already we are seeing so many holes in this trial. If this were to be looked at closely, this whole case would have been thrown out so quickly because of all of the judicial rules that they were breaking.
- Jesus is in the midst of one of the most unjust trials of all time:
- Injustice #1- The timing
 - We see that these 2 trials are taking place in the dead of night.
 - *But according to Jewish law, trials could only occur during the day, so that trials could be public and open to scrutiny if needed*
 - *Also, trials were not allowed to take place during holidays because of their sacredness and the traveling*
- But we know that this is taking place in the middle of the Passover celebrations.

- Injustice #2: - The Witnesses
- According to Jewish law, all the witnesses accusing the defense, must agree on all of the details of the crime, and if not, the case would be thrown out immediately.
 - But Mark lets us know specifically that they couldn't find anyone who could agree or that wouldn't contradict themselves.
 - Also, according to Jewish law, if the witnesses were found to be lying, they were supposed to receive the punishment the accused was threatened to receive. Which was supposed to deter false accusations.
 - But instead of following the law, Caiaphus and those gathered just keep trying until they found something they want to hear.
- After hours of nothing working, in Matthews account he says, ***“And [Caiaphis] stood up and said, “Have You no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against You?” But Jesus remained silent. And the***

high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God.”

- This was an intentional move by Caiaphis because by saying this line, he was putting Jesus under oath which means that silence would be legally seen as an admission of guilt. So now Jesus responds....
- ***Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard His blasphemy. What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.”***
-Matthew 26: 62-66 (ESV)
- Then in the first verse of Matthew 27, it says that they waited until morning, (*when this trial actually supposed to be held*), to make official

what this group had already decided when he says,

- ***“When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death.”
-Matthew 27:1 (ESV)***

- And here we see the 3rd trial:

- **TRIAL #3: THE SANHEDRIN (6am)**

- Here in these next 2 trials we see more injustices

- Injustice #3: The Due Process

- The Sanhedrin was a group of 70 scribes, elders, and priests led by the high priest that served as Israel’s Supreme court.
- They were the ones that the cases were brought to and they were supposed to judge fairly and impartially.
- But in this case, they were the ones bringing the case up!

- So the Sanhedrin is serving as the prosecution and the judge at the same time...which obviously is not allowed.

- Injustice #4: The Sentencing

- According to Jewish Law the Sanhedrin had to have a vote in order to sentence someone to death. And this wasn’t an “All in favor say aye!” type vote like we see them doing here
- It was a vote that was supposed to go one by one, very slowly, starting with the youngest person in the room going to the oldest so the rookies would not be persuaded by the veterans.

- And the vote had to be unanimous, we which know it was not because at the end of Luke 23 we see Joseph of Arimathea coming to collect Jesus’ body and Luke tells us that, “...*Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. **He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action.***” -**Luke 23: 50b-51 (ESV)**

- So we don't see a vote, we don't see an unanimous decision!
- But EVEN if they did unanimously agree... according to the law, if it was determined for someone to be sentenced to death. That ruling had to sit, and not be acted upon for 3 days
 - During those 3 days, the Sanhedrin would fast and pray to make sure that they made the right decision, and also that would leave more time for any other witnesses that might come forward and plead the cause of the accused
- Lastly, when the execution was to be carried out, whoever accused the guilty of the crime, would have to be the ones to carry out the execution...which again would deter some false accusers.
- But the Sanhedrin weren't going to wait 3 days, and they definitely weren't going to carry out the execution themselves, instead they send Him off to His 4th Trial
- **TRIAL #4: PILATE: (6:30am)**
- So we see that the official Sanhedrin trial, that should have been a long dragged out process didn't last long at all because they began that process at 6am and by 6:30, Jesus was over at the local governors mansion, in front of Pilate. And in Luke's account, he writes
 - ***“Then the whole company of them arose and brought Him before Pilate. And they began to accuse [Jesus], saying, “We found this Man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.” -Luke 23:1-2 (ESV)***
 - *Where did that come from?? All three Jewish trials, they accuse Him of being guilty of blasphemy...then out of nowhere they accuse Him of telling the people not to pay their taxes?? Which we know is a lie because they tried to catch Jesus in that by saying, “You know some say it's unlawful to pay taxes,” But Jesus just says, Pay unto Caesar that which is Caesar's”so this is a flat out lie!*

- But they couldn't just bring Him to Pilate to be executed for religious reasons, they had to have something to make it seem like He was a threat to the Romans that would get Pilate's attention.
- Now, let's get a little background on Pilate
 - Pilate was the Roman governor over the region of Judea.
 - But Pilate's tenure wasn't off to a very good start.
 - Whenever he was first appointed governor, history records, that he hung up banners of Tiberius Caesar's face in the Jewish temple. Now that was blasphemy to the Jewish people and it led to some intense protesting.
 - Pilate threatened to kill them, they called his bluff, and Pilate had to relent
- Not long after that, Pilate decided to take funds from the temple to help pay for a building project.
- Now that, of course, led to adamant protesting in the streets, and this time Pilate sends soldiers to take action and beat some of the protestors to death.
- This caused such a commotion that Caesar ended up putting Pilate on an official probation and said if he had one more incident, he would be fired.
- So of course Caiaphus knows this, and they are putting Pilate on the spot, giving him these trumped up charges.
- But Pilate obviously doesn't wanna get involved, he's already on thin ice...
- So Pilate asked Jesus directly, ***"Are you the King of the Jews?" And He answered him, "You have said so." Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this Man." But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place." -Luke 23: 3-5 (ESV)***

- Now Pilate sees his way out, “Oh He’s from Galilee you say! That’s Herod’s jurisdiction, this means that this is his problem, not mine!
- So Pilate send Jesus off to His 5th trial:
 - **TRIAL #5: HEROD (7am)**
 - So Herod is the so called King of this region. But is actually what was referred to as a Client-King. He was allowed to have power, given to him by the Roman Empire but he had to operate within the allowed parameters of the Roman Rule.
 - Now Herod had heard of Jesus, but never actually saw Him in person, and verse 8 says, ***“When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see Him, because he had heard about Him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by Him.” -Luke 23:8 (ESV)***
 - Now at first glance, this seems promising. We’ve seen this story before, we’ve seen the lepers, the blind, the friends of a crippled man,

the centurion, the woman with the flow of blood, even Zacchaeus —had all heard about Jesus, the wonderful works that He had done, the longed to see Him, and when they saw Him they were very glad, hoping that He would perform a miracle for them

- And each of those stories ended with Jesus blessing them beyond their wildest dreams
- But verse 9 says, ***“So he questioned Him at some length, but He made no answer.” -Luke 23:9 (ESV)***
 - So what’s different here?? Why does Herod get the cold shoulder when so many others received their miracle??
- Well the biggest difference here is that every other story we’ve seen had to do with people coming to faith
 - But Herod had no faith, he had no intention of ever having any faith...he wanted to be entertained.

- Charles Spurgeon once said, ***“Our Lord Jesus Christ came not into this world to be a performer: He did not leave His glory to earn the wondering approbation of men; and as Herod regarded Him as a mere wonderworker, and would have turned his court into a theatre wherein Jesus should be the chief actor, our Lord very wisely held His peace and did nothing at all.”*** -Charles Spurgeon
- You see, what Herod completely misunderstood is that Jesus never once performed a miracle to put on a show, save His own skin, or gain any notoriety. Which He easily could have done.
- Jesus only ever worked a miracle out of compassion and care for broken people
- Now Herod was definitively a broken person, but he wasn't broken before God. He thought too much of himself! He fancied Himself a king! (Even though he wasn't, he's really just a Roman Pawn)
- But that didn't change how much he thought of himself, and Jesus gives him nothing but silence.
- **James 4:6** says ***“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”*** And that is evident here.
- So Jesus stays silent, not giving Herod anything he was looking for
- No doubt the priests are telling Herod all of the same accusations that we've been hearing, which Herod wouldn't have cared much about, until they tell him that Jesus considers Himself a king!
 - Now that would have struck a cord with Herod, because he's a fake king, always trying to prove to himself and others that he actually is somebody
 - So they mock Him, make fun of Him, probably slap Him around a bit, while sarcastically referring to Him as “Your Majesty”

- Then they dress Him up in royal clothes as a joke for Pilate as they send Him back for His final trial.
- **TRIAL #6 PILATE (7:30am)**
- Pilate had to be exasperated whenever he sees Jesus being brought back to Him. John 18 does mention this, but Luke gives more detail.
- Verse 13 of Luke 23 says, "***Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this Man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining Him before you, behold, I did not find this Man guilty of any of your charges against Him. Neither did Herod, for he sent Him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. I will therefore punish and release Him."*** -Luke 23:13-16 (ESV)
- That punishment was going to be whipping Jesus' back with sharp metal objects specifically designed to grab the skin and rip the flesh to the point that most times they did this, you could see the person's kidney by the time they were done.
- Surely this is punishment enough! But they still weren't satisfied...then Pilate has an idea. There is a tradition that on each Passover day, that the Romans would release one political prisoner back to the Jewish people.
- So Pilate thinks he's going to turn the table on them. He has them so get Barrabas...
- But in verse 18, Luke writes. "***But they all cried out together, "Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas"...Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify Him!" A third time he said to them, "Why? What evil has He done? I have found in Him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release Him." But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that He should be crucified.***

And their voices prevailed. (Other Gospels say the he feared they would riot) So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.” -Luke 23:18-25 (ESV)

- Can you imagine being Barabbas here?
 - *You’re woken up at the break of dawn, roughed up by the guards, and jerked out of your cell*
 - *You’re not surprised because you knew this day was coming for a while now. Its execution day.*
 - *You’re brought before Pilate and a large crowd. Again not surprising...the Romans love public executions*
 - *Then you hear Pilate silence the crowd and declare... “Should I release to you this guilty murderer? Or this innocent Man??”*

- *What is this, a joke?*
- But then to your complete surprise, the people start chanting, “We want Barabbas....We. Want. Barabbas!”
 - “Really? You serious?”
- Then the guards come over grab your wrists, unlock your chains, and move your chains over to this Man..
 - *What do you make eye contact? Do you try and figure out who He is? Do you ask any questions at all?*
- Then you’re led down the steps, among the people, into the streets, you’re free to go
- *What happens when you’re walking around that day? The Romans put the crosses on the most public street sides with the most foot traffic... do you walk by and look up at that Man on the Middle Cross where you’re supposed to be?*
 - What do you do now? Where do you go from here?

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- Now the reality is, we don't know what Barabbas did, or where he went from there.
- But what is really interesting about him is the meaning of his name. It's so basic...**Bar- means "son...Abba- means "father"**
- So his name literally means "son of a father", and we see The Son of THE Father taking his place...so why involve Barabbas in this story at all? Because he represents basic humanity
- We don't see how Barabbas responded, because that's not the point! The point isn't how did Barrabas respond, to point is HOW ARE YOU GOING TO RESPOND?!?!
- The curse of sin, put you and I on death row. Because the wages of sin is death.
- So our sin, our selfishness, our lies, our wrongdoings, no matter how big or little we may see them...put us in chains, bound for an eternity of hopelessness.
- We're stuck! In a straitjacket of sin, just awaiting our sentence.
- But then Superman hands cuffs, just stands there on the platform in silence, and allows your chains to become His chains
- Allowed your sentence to become His sentence
- Takes your guilt upon Himself
- And allows you to go free, so that you could have the opportunity to live the rest of your days as a child of The Father in Heaven who's very image you were created in!
- CS Lewis said, ***"The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God."***- **CS Lewis**
- Now the question is, how are you going to respond to it?
 - Are you going to keep Him on trial?
 - Are you going to keep looking at His flawed followers as an excuse?
 - Are you going to wait until He's convenient for you or what you expect?

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- *If you were to die today, what would happen?
Where would you go?*
- *If you are in this room today and you cannot
confidently answer that question...I'm here to
tell you that Jesus took your place on that
cross so that you could have the complete
assurance of salvation.*

Sunday, April 2, 2023

The day that Fletcher was born was one of the scariest days of my life. On Thursday, June 23rd Rachel goes in for one of her regularly scheduled midwife appointments. While there they tell her that her blood pressure is just a little high and they're going to send her to the hospital for routine observation since she was 39 weeks pregnant. So at 4pm we get to the hospital, and her blood pressure evens out, blood work comes back perfect, things look good we're going to be going home. Next thing we know, the midwife is coming in asking Rachel if she wants to go ahead and induce. No! Rachel had been training her body and working so hard to prepare herself for an all natural birth. Well, she said that Fletchers heart rate was dropping every once in a while and they're not sure why so they need to order an IV and Ultrasound to see what's going on. About 2 hours later the ultra sound arrives and the last proceeds to give a 30 min ultrasound, doesn't say a word the whole time and it's obvious that Fletcher isn't moving in there. Shortly after she finished, now the surgeon comes in and says that we scored too low on the

ultrasound so the baby needs to come tonight, but then asks what we think about a C-section. No! Rachels two biggest fears going into this was induction or c-section and now these are our only two options! But the doctor explained that his heart rate was dropping with each minor contraction that Rachel wasn't even feeling yet, so his fear was that he would be able to tolerate the full labor contractions. But he said that the past hour had looked good so we had some time to talk and make a decision. And that's when I called the baby whisperer herself, Jenna Allen