

I mentioned last week that as we consider chapters 18-19, we behold our Savior's passion or suffering. I also mentioned that this suffering takes place in five stages: His arrest in the garden, His trial before the Jews, His trial before the Gentiles, His crucifixion, and His burial.

Having considered the first last week, His arrest in the garden, we come this week to consider the second, His trial before the Jews.

Now before I go any further, I must address two potential difficulties in this passage: (1) John omits our Savior's trial before Caiaphas, and only records what took place before Annas (this is opposite the other gospel accounts). If we were to compare the other gospels, Jesus was first taken to Annas and then taken to Caiaphas (both are described as high priests). But John only records what took place before Annas, omitting what occurred before Caiaphas (only mentioning in v24, that Annas sent Him to Caiaphas).

(2) John divides Jesus' trial before the Jews into two parts. John basically goes back and forth between the scenes that take place at the same time: (1) vv12-14 follow Jesus being bound and sent to Annas. (2) vv15-18 follow Peter who denies Him. (3) vv19-24 return to Jesus before Annas. (4) vv25-27 return to Peter who denies Jesus twice more.

Now when I first began to outline this sermon, I had every intention of dividing it into two sermons—I intended to first consider our Savior before Annas, and then return next week and examine Peter's denials, but the primary reason I chose otherwise is, I just couldn't get past the fact that the Holy Spirit inspired John to record these two events together.

These two accounts (the trial of Jesus and the denial of Peter), form the perfect contrast—victory verses failure, boldness verses cowardliness, honor verses shame, Savior verses sinner—I suggest, therefore, John records these two events together, going back and forth between them, because, while each one provides many lessons, together, they form a blessed contrast.

I. Jesus' Trial—vv12-14, 19-24

II. Peter's Denial—vv15-18, 25-27

I. Jesus' Trial—vv12-14, 19-24

1. I suggest our Savior's trial before Annas takes place in five stages—He is bound (v12), led away (v13), questions (v19), struck (v22), and sent to Caiaphas (v24).
2. (1) Jesus was bound, v12—"Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him."
3. Why did the soldiers bind Jesus? Well, let me suggest a few reasons: (a) to ensure that Jesus would not escape.
4. Matt.26:48—"Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, Whomever I kiss, He is the One; hold Him fast (bind Him)."
5. Why did Judas warn them to "bind Him" or "hold Him fast," but because he knew something of Christ's power.
6. Judas, though he was never converted, knew Jesus had power to perform miracles and could escape if He desired.
7. And thus, we are reminded, that our Savior willingly suffers the mistreatment of the Jews, as He could have easily liberated Himself.
8. (b) To shame and disgrace Him—I think this is likely, given the fact, that the Jews especially, grew to hate Christ.
9. He grieved them for three years—the Jewish leaders hated Christ, and no doubt welcomed the chance to shame Him.
10. (c) To fulfill several OT types, Gen.22:9—"And Abraham built an altar and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar upon the wood."

11. If you recall, Isaac was likely a teenage boy, who could have easily outrun his father and fled from the scene—but instead he was willingly bound and placed upon the altar.
12. And then, just before Abraham brought down the knife into Isaac, his only begotten and beloved son, the Angel of the Lord told him to stop.
13. He then said, the Lord Himself would provide a Lamb—and this is exactly what is now happening in the garden (the Lord is providing a Lamb).
14. Ps.118:27—"Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar"—if you remember, the altar had horns on every corner (so that the sacrifice could be bound to it, while it was killed and then cut into pieces to be burned).
15. (2) He was led away, v13—"And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year."
16. Here we must address an issue that has vexed the commentators for centuries. How can both Annas and Caiaphas be high priests?
17. In v13, Caiaphas is described as high priest that year, and yet, in v19, Annas himself is described as the high priest.
18. Well, the answer to this apparent contradiction is rather simple—Annas was the old high priest and Caiaphas the new high priest.
19. According to the OT, the high priest remained in office as long as he lived, but this was no longer the case by the first century.
20. High priests often passed down the title to sons and family members, this way it ensured it remained in the family.
21. For brethren, we must remember—being a priest, and especially a high priest, was a very profitable business in the first century.
22. Worshippers came from distant lands to worship, and this meant they needed sacrifices to offer up in the temple.
23. And they would have forced worshipers to purchase their own animals, which brought a profit to everyone involved.
24. Furthermore, the high priest imposed various taxes upon worshippers, which resulted in them becoming very rich.
25. And so, we find that Annas had apparently passed on the title to one of his sons-in-law, keeping it in the family.
26. Thus, because once a high priest always a high priest, Annas retained the title, and was referred to as high priest.
27. This is like the office of president—although Barack Obama is no longer the sitting president, we refer to him as President Obama (twice elsewhere, Lk.3:2 and Acts 4:6, the NT refers to Annas as the high priest).
28. And so, our Savior is first led to Annas, the former high priest, and then, according to v24, He was sent to Caiaphas, the present high priest.
29. Thus, John reminds his readers (v14), that it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.
30. Why does John remind his readers of this fact—well, if you turn back to John 11:47-50, we will find the answer.
31. Caiaphas was a very shrewd man, who sought to protect the high priestly business from being taken from them (this underscores the character of these men).
32. (3) He was questioned, v19—"The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine"—that is, what did He teach His disciples with reference to their relation to the Jews and Romans.
33. It seems likely, the primary concern of Annas, as it would be for Caiaphas—would His followers mess up their present situation.
34. Remember, the priesthood was corrupt, and were no doubt afraid that Christ or His followers, would mess this up.
35. And so, Annas want to know about His disciples and His doctrine, not because he was interested to learn, but to protect himself.

36. V20—"Jesus answered him, I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple where the Jews always meet and in secret I have said nothing. Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed, they know what I said."
37. In other words—If you really want to know what I taught the people, all you must do as is ask those who heard.
38. Our Savior wasn't a leader of some cult that intended to overturn or revolt against the political or social system.
39. Thus, the goal of all the questioning was to find a reason to put Him to death—some heresy (against the Jews), or political aspirations (against the Romans).
40. But either way, the entire point was to find a reason to send Him to the Romans, that they might put Him to death.
41. (4) He was struck, v22—"And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Do You answer the high priest like that?"
42. The Greek word rendered—"with the palm of his hand" literally simply means—"to give a blow" and can refer either to the hand or rod.
43. In other words, the officer could have struck Him with his hand or a rod, either way, this is the first of many blows our Savior would receive this day.
44. V23—"Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?"
45. That is—"If you can prove that anything I've ever said (in My ministry or this evening), was evil, then provide witness of the evil."
46. According to Jewish custom, a witness was necessary to convict someone of a crime, and they had no witness.
47. Brethren, there could have been NO witness, for everything our blessed Savior ever said, was only the pure truth.
48. Matt.26:59-60—"Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none (that is, actual witnesses).
49. (5) He was sent away, v24—"Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest"—this kind of brings everything full circle.
50. Far from being over, our Savior's sufferings are only beginning, for next He'll stand before Caiaphas, and then Pilate, then Herod, and then Pilate again.
51. Remember brethren, it's still rather early in the morning—our Savior still has 10-12 hours of suffering before Him.
52. Obs.1—Behold the wickedness of man—ponder what man here does—he binds, questions, and strikes God in flesh.
53. Under the OT, a child who struck his parents was worthy of death—he was stoned and then his body hung on a tree.
54. Now, if a child deserves to die if they struck a parent, how much more does a man deserve death, who strikes their Creator.
55. In this officer, the entire Jewish nation was represented, and tragically now comes to its pinnacle of wickedness.
56. The very system started by Him, and given to the nation of Israel as a great privilege, now puts God Himself on trial.
57. Micah 5:1-2—"They will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek. But you, Bethlehem, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."
58. But dear brethren, I suggest that within Annas and this officer, we not only find a representation of Israel but mankind.
59. Man puts God on trial every day, rejecting His word and law, and they would treat Christ the same way if possible.
60. Obs.2—Behold the perfection of God's Lamb—by this I mean, here we behold Christ's perfect patience and purity.

61. Our Savior's response in v23, makes very clear, that all He's said and done, was without evil and above reproach.
62. Obs.3—Behold the humiliation of God's Servant—this of course is an evident observation within this passage.
63. The leaders of the law sit as judgment against Christ, because there's a sense in which, He was judged by the law.
64. Although He was perfectly sinless and guiltless, He was standing in the place and stead of sinful and guilty sinners.

II. Peter's Denial—vv15-18, 25-27

1. From the other gospels we learn, that after Jesus was bound and taken to Annas, the rest of the disciples fled (Matt.26:56).
2. But now we learn from v15, that seemingly two of the disciples, doubled back to follow Him to the high priest.
3. These two disciples being, Simon Peter and "another disciple," which is mostly likely, a reference to John himself.
4. John says, seemingly of himself—"Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest."
5. Let me just say, before moving forward, while Peter really blows it, there is a sense in which he didn't do all bad.
6. Out of the eleven disciples, only Peter and John returned to follow Christ, first to Annas and then to Caiaphas.
7. John MacArthur—"Peter loved Jesus too much to totally leave Him, and yet not enough to align Himself with Him."
8. Thus, I want to suggest to you, three things about Peter's denial, and then I want to finish by providing three primary reasons Peter's denial is recorded for us.
9. (1) It was foretold—while John omits this point, we read in Matthew tells us, that our Savior foretold Peter's denial, in response to his self-confidence.
10. Matt.26:31-35—"All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night...Peter answered and said to Him, 'Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.' Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.'"
11. (2) It was repeated—that is, Peter didn't merely deny he knew Christ once, but three times—once while Christ was before Annas and twice while He was before Caiaphas.
12. Now, it appears that both Annas and Caiaphas, because they were both high priests, likely lived near each other.
13. It's for this reason, that seemingly, while Jesus moves from Annas to Caiaphas, Peter remains in the same courtyard.
14. Peter denies being a disciple of Christ, v17, again in v25, and again to the high priest's servant in v27—"and immediately a rooster crowed."
15. This is what our Savior foretold—"before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times," and this is exactly what Peter does.
16. He denied knowing Christ and being a disciple—Why—well, brethren, because Peter was afraid of what would happen.
17. Look what happened to Christ—He was arrested and now He's being examined—Peter was afraid this would happen to him.
18. And thus, Peter repeatedly, three times, lied about his attachment to Christ, denying that He even knew Christ.
19. (3) It was forgiven—by this I mean, our Savior kept Peter from falling, and afterwards, brought Him to repentance and forgiveness.
20. This is recorded later in John's gospel, 21:15-19, when three times Jesus asks Peter—"Do you love Me...then feed My sheep."

21. It seems evident our Savior asked Peter three times because he denied Christ three times—this was a way to show Peter that His former actions had been forgiven.
22. And now, Christ entrusted Peter with His dearly beloved sheep—"Peter if you love Me, then feed (tend) My sheep."
23. Now, before I suggest three reasons why Peter's denial has been recorded for us, let me first point out the sin of denial can take several forms.
24. For Peter, it was rather straightforward—he lied and claimed he didn't know Christ and wasn't His follower (disciple).
25. But, denying Christ can look very different—we can simply fail to speak up for Him, for fear of shame or rejection.
26. Or else, we can fail to act for Him when necessary—that is, we can fail to live for Him before others, for fear of rejection.
27. Brethren, the fear of man is a very powerful force—most of us want to fit in and belong, and at times, this may entail denying Christ.
28. (a) To humble Peter—the Lord had work for Peter to do, and He needed to first empty Peter of self-confidence.
29. Martin Luther—"The fall of Peter was necessary, so that he might be humbled. For Peter was eventually to be filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit."
30. In other words—before the Lord would mightily use Peter, He must first humble Peter and lay him close to the ground.
31. Dear brethren, I dare say, there is no grace more necessary for a Christian leader (or a Christian in general), than humility.
32. Give me a man who is humble with few gifts, before a man who is proud and self-confident with many or great gifts.
33. Any situation we endure that humbles is a good thing—it likely means the Lord is preparing us for further work.
34. Now remember brethren, that humility and boldness are not opposites—who can be very humble and yet very bold.
35. As we read through the book of Acts, Peter was a bold man, who eventually was himself arrested, and put to death.
36. But hears the difference—he no longer sought to labor in his own strength and ability, but in that given him by Christ.
37. (b) To warn us—that is, to caution us, through Peter's example, of the dangers of self-trust and self-confidence.
38. J.C. Ryle—"The fall of Peter is doubtless intended to be a lesson to the whole Church of Christ. It is recorded for our learning that we be kept from like sorrowful overthrow. It is a beacon mercifully set up in Scripture, to prevent others making shipwreck. It shows us the danger of pride and self-confidence."
39. Dear brethren, where do we get the strength to stand for Christ, and not deny Him, regardless of the cost—not from ourselves!
40. Just a few hours before, Peter was boasting that he would never leave nor forsake Christ, and then look what happened.
41. This is an important lesson learned from Peter—"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1Cor.10:12).
42. (c) To encourage us—this is an important and very beautiful lesson, taken from the weakness and failure of Peter.
43. We like Peter, will prove ourselves weak and fearful, and when this happens, we too must look to Christ for forgiveness.
44. Peter is an example that God can and does use weak and frail people—that to fail once, twice, or three times, doesn't disqualify us.
45. Martin Luther—"No matter how great a sinner you may be, look at Peter"—that is, see how Peter was forgiven, restored, and used.