



LET'S BEGIN HERE

This study may strike you as somewhat technical in nature and therefore perhaps not as personally inspiring. But before making that judgment, take a few moments to read John 18 in its entirety. Ask the Lord to speak to you intimately about the significance of Jesus enduring this series of unjust trials, so you might experience freedom from sin's condemnation.

Allow this lesson to inspire you to think deeply about the meaning of the events recorded in this passage. Remember: "The word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires" (Hebrews 4:12). Let the Word change you!



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Take a few moments to study the chart below that provides an overview of Jesus' trials as presented in the Gospels. Take your time, looking up passages and comparing them with others. Note things you learn that perhaps you'd not known previously.

Quotable

*Remember this:
You and I deserve
that spit, if I may
be so brash.
We deserve the
nails in our feet and
hands. It was our
sins that He bore,
not His. He took
our place. Let us
never forget.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



The Trials of Jesus Christ

| Trial | Officiating Authority | Scripture | Accusation | Legality | Type | Result |
|-------|--|---|--|--|----------------------|--|
| 1 | Annas, ex-high priest of the Jews (A.D. 6–15). | John 18:13–23 | Trumped-up charges of irreverence to Annas. | ILLEGAL! Held at night. No specific charges. Prejudice. Violence. | Jewish and Religious | Found guilty of irreverence and rushed to Caiaphas. |
| 2 | Caiaphas—Annas' son-in-law—and the Sanhedrin (A.D. 18–36). | Matthew 26:57–68 Mark 14:53–65 John 18:24 | Claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of God—blasphemy (worthy of death under Jewish law). | ILLEGAL! Held at night. False witnesses. Prejudice. Violence. | Jewish and Religious | Declared guilty of blasphemy and rushed to the Sanhedrin (Jewish supreme court). |
| 3 | The Sanhedrin—seventy ruling men of Israel (their verdict was needed before He could be taken to Roman officials). | Mark 15:1a Luke 22:66–71 | Claiming to be the Son of God—blasphemy. | ILLEGAL! Accusation switched. No witnesses. Improper voting. | Jewish and Religious | Declared guilty of blasphemy and rushed to Roman official, Pilate. |
| 4 | Pilate, governor of Judea, who was already in “hot water” with Rome (A.D. 26–36). | Matthew 27:11–14 Mark 15:1b–5 Luke 23:1–7 John 18:28–38 | Treason (accusation was changed, since treason was worthy of capital punishment in Rome). | ILLEGAL! Christ was kept under arrest, although He was found innocent. No defense attorney. Violence. | Roman and Civil | Found innocent . . . but rushed to Herod Antipas; mob overruled Pilate. |
| 5 | Herod Antipas, governor of Galilee (4 B.C.–A.D. 39). | Luke 23:8–12 | No accusation was made. | ILLEGAL! No grounds. Mockery in courtroom. No defense attorney. Violence. | Roman and Civil | Mistreated and mocked; returned to Pilate without decision made by Herod. |
| 6 | Pilate (second time). | Matthew 27:15–26 Mark 15:6–15 Luke 23:18–25 John 18:39–19:16 | Treason, though not proven (Pilate bargained with the mob, putting Christ on a level with Barabbas, a criminal). | ILLEGAL! Without proof of guilt, Pilate allowed an innocent man to be condemned. | Roman and Civil | Found innocent, but Pilate “washed his hands” and allowed Him to be crucified. |

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Another excellent resource for you to consult is Chuck’s commentary on John’s gospel, *Insights on John*, which is part of the Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary series available on the Insight for Living Ministries [Web store](#). Be sure to study the map of [Jerusalem](#) and the surrounding area on page 340 of Chuck’s commentary as well as the chart on pages 346–347 which lists the 18 specific illegal actions that were taken during the arrest and subsequent trials of Jesus.





Observation: Looking at the Trials

One helpful way to begin to understand the organization of a passage is to study the paragraph breaks and headings included in your Bible. These are not inspired by the Holy Spirit, but they were added by editors who carefully studied the original text and provided structural markers for understanding. Observation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process where you identify significant details that help you build a foundation for interpretation.

What are some of the headings included in your Bible that help break down the structure of John 18? List them below along with the verses that each section includes.

What observations can you make about key individuals, the setting, and the scenes that are described? List what you observe.

KEY PEOPLE:

KEY PLACES:



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Arrest and Trials

John 18:1–24

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

KEY DETAILS ABOUT SETTING (i.e., times of day, surroundings, etc.):

Much of John 18 includes dialogue, particularly questions and answers. Read through the chapter again, and see if you can determine how many questions were asked of Jesus and how many times He responded. Write your observations below.

Anything jump out at you as significant in terms of main themes present in each trial or setting? If so, how would you summarize those themes?

Using a Bible dictionary such as *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, look up the names of some of the key places and individuals portrayed in this series of trials. Read carefully the information provided for each one, and write down what you discover.

Kidron Valley:

Roman soldiers (*Cohort*):

Annas, the high priest:

Caiaphas:

Temple guards:



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Jewish trials (courts):

Pilate:



Interpretation: Understanding the Significance of the Trials

Mostly, John 18 is a record of events that led to Jesus' false accusation and ultimate conviction of treason. But the foundation for understanding John's original purpose in including these details can be found in the ensuing dialogues between Jesus and His interrogators. By paying close attention to *dialogue* in Biblical narrative, you'll discover important building blocks for forming your interpretation. Remember: Interpretation answers the question, *What does it mean?*

Let's look closely at the dialogue sections of John 18 and attempt to answer some interpretation questions.

The Arrest—John 18:1–12

Interestingly, John wrote that “Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him,” so He initiated the conversation by asking, “Who are you looking for?” (John 18:4). What did Jesus' calm composure suggest about His readiness for this unfolding of events?

The fact that the arrest took place at night rendered the arrest illegal, according to Mosaic law. Yet Jesus willingly and repeatedly identified Himself as the One for whom they were looking, basically turning Himself over to the authorities (18:5–9).

Four times Jesus said, “I AM he.” Why is that significant? Why do you believe John included this repeated phrase?

NOTE: The first set of trials Jesus endured were Jewish trials and should have abided closely with Jewish law as prescribed in the Old Testament. Under Jewish law, no one person could act as judge. The verdict was decided by a “court” of at least three. A more important case might be judged by a band of 23, known as the Lesser Sanhedrin. The ultimate court was the Greater Sanhedrin, consisting of 70 to 73 men. This was the only body that could legally sentence someone to death for a crime.



Trial Before Annas—John 18:12–24

According to Jewish law, such interrogation and trial could not occur at night nor could it be adjudicated by a single individual. Bringing Jesus before Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest, was another illegal act.

When asked about His teaching, Jesus responded by telling His interrogator about the nature and content of His teaching.

Why do you think Jesus responded to Annas this way? What would have been the significance of the public witnessing Jesus' teaching?

At that reply, one of the temple guards struck Jesus in the face with his fist. How did Jesus respond? Jesus emphasized the fact that He was “speaking the truth” (John 18:23). Why is that significant?

Trial Before Caiaphas—John 18:24–28

John offered very little detail about the trial before Caiaphas except that it was finished in the early hours of the morning, after which Jesus was taken to the Roman governor Pilate. Again, that detail emphasizes the illegal nature of this trial, having also taken place at night.

What is the significance of Jesus having stood before two very important religious judges, Annas and Caiaphas, prior to being taken before Pilate?



Trial Before Pilate—John 18:29–40

This trial is perhaps the most famous and well-known episode in the entire final drama of Jesus' life and ministry. As the Lamb of God, our perfect Savior, stood before this powerful Roman official, the overtones of vindication were apparent in the unfolding conversation. Pilate, not a believer, was still a reasonable and extremely intelligent individual. He assessed that the charges brought against Jesus by the Jewish leaders seemed questionable.

At first, Pilate brushed Jesus away, urging the Jews to handle the situation themselves. But the Jews persisted, knowing that only a representative of Rome could sentence Jesus to death (John 18:31).

How did Pilate's initial dismissal of the Jewish charges emphasize John's point that Jesus was being unfairly accused?

When Pilate summoned Jesus back to his headquarters, he asked Him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" (18:33). Why was that question important?

How did Jesus respond (18:34–37)?

How did Pilate's line of questioning provide an opportunity for Jesus to testify about Himself and the truth He offers to the world (18:36–37)?





Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Correlating the Scripture passages you're studying with other biblical passages helps you fine-tune your interpretation. Though John did not cover in detail the circumstances of Jesus standing before Caiaphas, Mark did in his gospel. Read carefully Mark's account of this trial in Mark 14:53–65.

How does Mark's account of the trial before Caiaphas compare with John's brief description of it?

The Jewish leaders were struggling to find evidence to convict Jesus and sentence Him to death. Mark wrote that they resorted to recruiting "false witnesses" to testify against Jesus to build their case (Mark 14:55–59).

How does this detail that Mark included about the need for false testimony contrast with Jesus' emphasis on His speaking "the truth" (John 18:37)?

What did Jesus finally say to Caiaphas, according to Mark's account, that caused the high priest to tear his robes and charge Jesus with blasphemy (Mark 14:60–63)?

According to Mark's account, who pronounced the guilty verdict against Jesus (14:64)?

Why is this significant?



**Application: Jesus Our Model in Suffering**

Jesus was slandered and treated inhumanely by a religious and legal system bent on His destruction. But where others could cry, “Mistrial!” He demanded no appeal. He stood and endured all the abuse, shame, and torture to bring about your salvation. All the while, His trust remained firmly in His Father’s gracious purposes and will.

Every step of the way, Jesus left behind a compelling example of how to bear up under suffering unjustly imposed. The apostle Peter, who witnessed all of it, wrote,

For God is pleased when, conscious of his will, you patiently endure unfair treatment. Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are being beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you. For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:19–21)

Ever been falsely accused and suffered the consequences? Have you recently experienced a painful injustice because someone else simply misunderstood you or ignored the truth?

The key to Christ’s attitude was trust—not in the legal system or the religious systems that ought to treat you fairly and graciously but in “the hands of God, who always judges fairly” (2:23).

Turn your burden of injustice over to Him today. Leave it with Him. He knows exactly what has transpired. He knows your heart. You can trust Him with your integrity. Let Him carry you through this trial.

**A FINAL PRAYER**

Thank You, Father, for allowing Your Son Jesus to endure such horrifying injustice and for receiving the penalty for sin in my place. My heart is filled with gratitude that You and You alone make all things new. I praise You today for Jesus and all He has accomplished for me! In His wonderful name, amen.



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Arrest and Trials

John 18:1–24

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

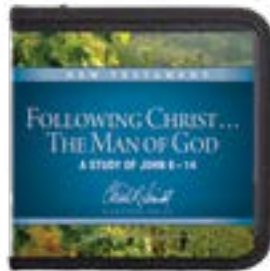
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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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