

John 18

John 14-17 were all *discourse*, that is, Jesus talking. John 18 brings us back to *narrative*.

Modern Scholarship Problem: Some scholars see the discourse chapters, 15-17 as a problem because Jesus says “*Get up. Let’s leave this place*” at the end of ch 14, but then he keeps talking for three chapters. The “Modern Scholar’s” solution is to say “The Gospels are compiled much later by writers drawing from many sources. Chapters 15-17 are other material from other discourses put here for lack of any other place to put them.”

The “redactor/compiler” theory is not correct for two main reasons:

First, the earliest copies of all four gospels show them to be pretty much intact. There are no early copies of John with chapters 15-17 missing (which is what you would expect if the “Modern Scholarship” idea above was true).

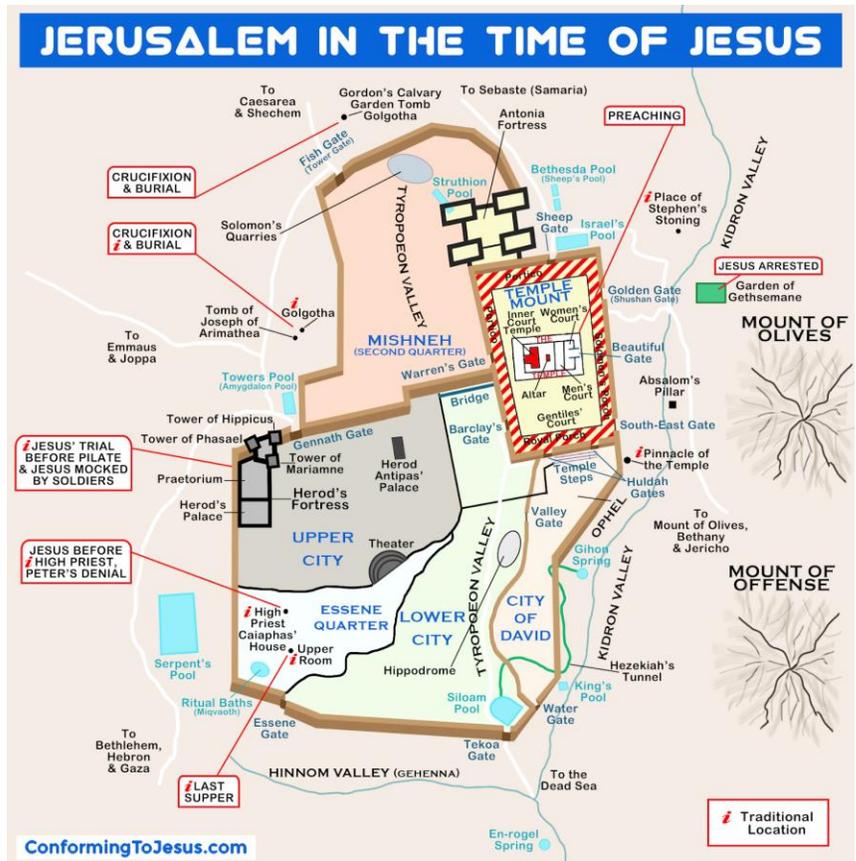
Second, chapters 15-17 are tightly woven together with all the themes present in the rest of the Gospel of John. If this was something randomly inserted into this place, it probably wouldn’t have a unified theme with the rest of the book.

When a movie *The Gospel of John* was being made (2004), script writers were concerned about these chapters and what to do with them since many scholars thought they were an insertion. They came up with this solution: Jesus says all these things as they are walking from the Upper Room to Gethsemane. They stop at a cave where Jesus prays the High Priestly Prayer, and then Jesus proceeds to Gethsemane with Peter, James and John.

18:1

“...Jesus went with his disciples across the Kidron Valley...” visible in the map just beyond the eastern wall, a little south of the temple. We think the house with the “Upper Room” was somewhere in the area labeled “Upper City.”

Gethsemane is not named in John. It is only called “*a garden.*” “Gethsemane” is on the Mount of Olives, and



the name means “oil press.”

18:2 “*Jesus often met there with his disciples.*” Though it isn’t mentioned in the Gospels, we get the feeling that Jesus retreated to Bethany at the end of each day of Holy Week. If so, Gethsemane would have been a place they passed through coming and going.

18:3 “*...lanterns, torches and weapons.*” What were they expecting? Possible resistance from the disciples?

Remember, along with “**Who is Jesus?**” our question through John’s Passion History is “**Who is really in charge here?**”

18:4 “*Jesus, knowing everything that was going to happen to him,...*” Who is really in charge here?

“*...went out and asked them, “Who are you looking for?”* When Jesus asks a question, it’s never because he doesn’t know. He wants to bring out what others know. He wants them to say it.

18:5 “*Jesus the Nazarene,*” they replied. “*I am he,*” Jesus told them. Is Jesus keen to make a getaway? No.

“*Judas, the betrayer, was standing with them.*” This corresponds to 13:28-29. Where did Judas go? He went to get a company of soldiers and some guards from the chief priests and the Pharisees with lanterns, torches and weapons.

18:6 “*When Jesus told them, “I am he,” they backed away and fell to the ground.*” Who is really in charge here?

As a child, hearing this in a Wednesday Lenten service, I thought, “Jesus, step over them and run!”

18:7 Why does Jesus ask questions?

18:8 “*...let these men go...*” They deserted him (Matthew 26:56), but he also let them go for their own safety.

18:10 Going back to “What did the guards and soldiers expect, bringing lanterns, torches and weapons?” Here we have Peter with a sword. How skilled a swordsman was Peter? (In *Lord of the Rings* movies, you never see anyone hacking off an ear. They go for the vitals, for an arm, leg or neck. Peter hits an ear.

18:11 Does Jesus want that kind of defense?

“*Shall I not drink the cup my Father has given me?*” reminds us of Jesus Gethsemane prayer (not recorded by John) in Matthew 26:39, “*My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.*”

Was Jesus keen on a quick getaway?

- 18:12 “...[they] arrested Jesus and bound him.” What did they expect? Think back to v. 6. He knocks them over with a word--and now they tie him up.
- 18:13 Annas, the previous high priest. Caiaphas, the present high priest. Annas was appointed high priest by Quirinius in A.D. 6 and served until A. D. 15. He was the head of a family of priests. Five sons and a son-in-law followed him as high priest. Eleazar (16-17), Joseph Caiaphas (18-36), Jonathan 37-37, 44), Theophilus (37-41), Matthias (43), and Annas Jr. (63). Annas seems to be like a “Godfather” of this priestly family. Caiaphas may have been the high priest, but Annas was the head of the “family.”
- 18:14 “*It is better that one man die for the people.*” John 11:50
- 18:15 “...another disciple...” Thought to be John.
- 18:16 “*Peter stood outside by the door.*” Peter is often the “me first” disciple. How is he now? Sneaky. Ashamed of his swordsmanship. Possibly ashamed of his impetuosity. And now, ashamed of Jesus.
- 18:16 John, known to the high priest, talks to the girl watching the door. What does he say? Probably something like “Miss, the high priest knows me. Could you let me and my friend in so we can see what happens to Jesus of Nazareth?”
- 18:17 And now the girl asks Peter, “*You are not one of this man’s disciples too, are you?*” She asks the question like she already knows that he is. “*I am not!*” must have been a surprise to her.
- How big of a threat was this girl to Peter? Herself, probably not much. She could shout, “Hey! He’s one of them. Get him, too!”
- 18:18 Now picture Peter, standing with other servants and guards around the fire of coals. Suspicious. Hoping not to be identified. Is there some of Malchus’ blood on Peter’s sleeve? Is he still carrying his sword? Is he looking around to see if he recognizes anyone from Gethsemane?
- 18:19 “*The high priest*” This is still Annas, the “Godfather” (v. 24).
- 18:20-21 Again, go back to the thought, “Is Christianity a mystery religion?” No. Jesus says what he says out in the open. The most controversial things he said, “*Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s*” were said in public.
- 18:22-23 A logical fallacy is *ad baculum*. An appeal to force. “Don’t do this, or you’ll be sorry.” It’s a weak argument. Here the *ad baculum* is a response to “I taught openly. I said nothing in secret. Everyone should know what I said.”
- 18:24 Off to Caiaphas. John tells us nothing about the trial before Caiaphas. According to Matthew, false witnesses are brought in at this point (Matthew 26:60).
- 18:25 Another person asks him, “*You are not one of his disciples too, are you?*” And then, horror of horrors, someone says, “*Didn’t I see you with him in the garden?*” A relative of Malchus.

18:27 “...a rooster crowed.” (See 13:38).
Who is really in charge here?

18:28 The Praetorium is on the southwest side of the city.
Northwest corner of the “Upper City.”

Caiaphas’ house is thought to be on the south end of the “Upper City.”

I always thought that there is *irony* here. The chief priests are doing a most unclean thing, hasty judgment and injustice, and they refuse to enter Pilate’s Praetorium so that they will not become ceremonially unclean.

“So Pilate went out to them...” Pilate’s irritation is evident throughout these two chapters.

Pontius Pilate was the fifth governor of the

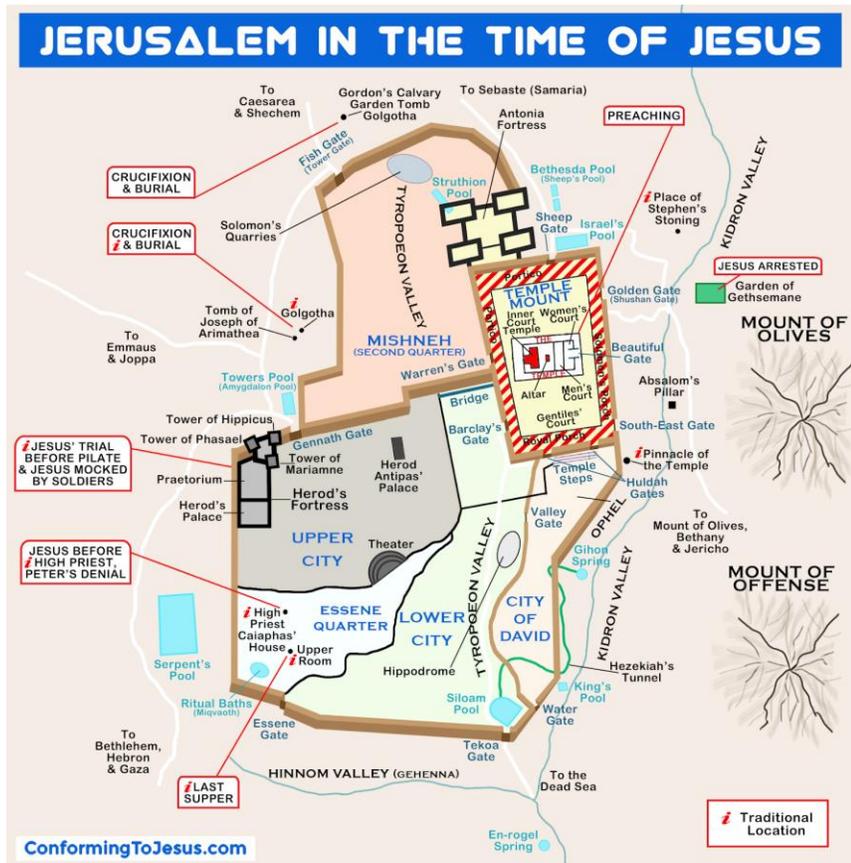
Roman province of Judaea, serving under Emperor Tiberius from the year 26/27 to 36/37.

He “mixed worshippers’ blood with their sacrifices” (Luke 13:1) some time before December of 29. (Best guess is that this means Pilate saw some commotion in the Temple courts, thought a riot was starting, and sent his soldiers in with the order “Swing your swords first, ask questions later.” Josephus says Pilate was removed as governor/praefect in 37 because he slaughtered unarmed Samaritans.

With the exception of 19:8, Pilate seems to be bold, pompous, caring little about true justice.

18:29 “What charge...?” A simple question.

18:30 “If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.” Evaluate the Jewish leaders’ answer. Is it an answer? (Use this one next time you’re called in for jury duty. “If he’s presumed innocent, why is he on trial?”)



18:31 *“Judge him yourself...”* They already did. The real point is in v. 31b. *“It is not legal for us to put anyone to death.”* That’s what they want.

18:32 *“The statement Jesus had spoken indicating what kind of death he was going to die...”*
Matthew 26:2, John 3:14, 15:34. The Romans crucified non-citizens. It was a rule-by-terror tactic.

Crucifixion was capital punishment (goal of killing someone for a crime) but also had a great shame factor. In some cultures, a body is displayed crucified *after* the condemned is killed.



More about crucifixion later.

18:33 *“Are you the King of the Jews?”* Luke 23:2 *“We found this fellow misleading our nation, forbidding the payment of taxes to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.”*

18:34 Why does Jesus ask questions?

18:35 Pilate is clueless about Annas the “Godfather” and what he may be doing. *“What have you done?”* is the real question.

18:36 *“My kingdom is not of this world.”* What were some of the “Hosannas” for on Palm Sunday? Hope of an earthly kingdom, a restoration of Israel, driving out the Romans.

“If my kingdom were of this world...” we wouldn’t even be here.

18:37 *“You are a king then?”* Pilate is being engaged in conversation with Jesus.

“For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” Same thought as “Your kingdom come” from the Lord’s Prayer. God establishes his rule in a person’s heart when the person hears the word, believes it and lives by it.

18:38 “*What is truth?*” He hadn’t seen any that morning... Cynical about Jewish temple politics... perhaps cynical about Roman politics.

18:39 “*I find no basis for a charge against him.*” There is Pilate’s verdict. (“Now,” Pilate thinks, “I’ll get rid of Jesus with my Passover clemency.”) “*So do you want me to release the King of the Jews for you?*” What is Pilate doing by calling Jesus “King of the Jews” here? Insulting the Jewish leaders.

18:40 “*Not this man, but Barabbas!*” (*Now Barabbas was a rebel.*) Some translate as “murderer.”

How badly did the Jewish leaders want to get rid of Jesus? So badly, they didn’t care if a *lēstēs* was free among them.