

John 18-19

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Overview

From a literary point of view, ch. 18 represents a major change from what we have seen in chapters 13-17, and to a large extent in the entire book up to this point. Robert Longacre distinguishes four different kinds of text on the basis of two characteristics:

1. Do they trace the flow of time, or are they a-temporal?
2. Is the dominant mode imperative (telling people what to do), or indicative (communicating facts)?

		Time	
		Marked	Unmarked
Mode	Imperative	Recipe (instructions for sacrifices in Leviticus)	Exhortation (John 17)
	Indicative	Narrative (John 18-21)	Exposition (John 13-16)

The URD was a mix of exhortation and exposition. Now we move into pure narrative.

The importance of recognizing this shift is that the main structuring principles change. In atemporal passages, structure is communicated mostly by patterns of similarity and dissimilarity in key words, verbal forms, even statements. These patterns can also appear in narrative (notably, Ruth and Jonah), but the notion of the Scene now comes into play. Scene is defined by characters, place, and time, and when any one of these changes, the scene shifts.

Scene is the overall structuring mechanism for the gospel as a whole, which alternates between Jerusalem and not-Jerusalem. We'll find that it also governs the last four chapters. As with the gospel as a whole, the main shifts are in location, with two scenes further divided by discontinuous shifts in time.

- 18:1-11, in the garden
- 18:12-27, in the palace of the high priests
- 18:18-19:16a, before Pilate
- 19:16b-37, on Calvary
- 19:38-20:18, at the garden; this scene is further divided by a shift in time
 - 19:38-42, the last day of the week
 - 20:1-18, the first day of the week
- 20:19-31, in the upper room, again divided temporally
 - 19-23, resurrection day
 - 24-31, eight days later
- 21, in Galilee

One more detail is critical. We have noted that the overall rhythm of the book is driven by 1:11-12, how

the Lord repeatedly comes to his own place (Jerusalem), and his own people (the Jews) do not receive him, but there is a group who do receive him. The first and last scene in this series are outside of Jerusalem, while the others are in Jerusalem. John portrays the withdrawal to Gethsemane as the fulfillment of a critical OT type emphasizing the rejection of the Messiah and thus reinforcing 1:11, while the final withdrawal with his faithful disciples to the sea of Tiberias emphasizes 1:12.

Arrest in the Garden, 18:1-11

This scene has three movements, each with an important spiritual message.

- In the physical setting (vv. 1-3) we see the theme of 1:11 reinforced once more, and are warned that the true people of God often are not found in the places where we expect them to be.
- In our Lord's interaction with the attackers (vv. 4-9) we see him in control, and are reminded of how weak we are by comparison.
- Peter's attack on Malchus (vv. 10-11) is an example of not relying on the Lord's protection, and forms the basis for evaluating Peter's actions in the next scene.

Setting, 1-3

The point of the setting of this scene is to draw a parallel with an prominent OT event, which emphasizes the book's opening summary, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (1:11). Earlier, we discerned 11:1-12:11 as one of the cycles of withdrawal. The parallel here suggests that 18:1-11 should be another.

1 When Jesus had spoken these words.--This confirms that the high priestly prayer precedes the prayer of agony, which was uttered on the Mount of Olives, according to Luke 22:39.

the brook Cedron.--A wadi, a dry streambed, that runs N-S between Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives. It formed the western boundary of Jerusalem, as seen from Solomon's warning to Shimei in 1 Kings 2:37. Because of past treacherous actions, Solomon wanted him to stay in Jerusalem, and warned him that if he ever passed over Kidron, he would be executed. The symbolic nature of the boundary is clear in the sequel. Shimei did leave Jerusalem, not toward the east over the Kidron, but toward the west to Gath. Nevertheless, Solomon had him slain.

he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron.--A highly symbolic action, reminiscent of David and his loyal followers in 2 Sam 15:23 when they fled Absalom. He takes his place as the true king, displaced by usurpers from his capital. Gill traces the parallel nicely:

it was the brook David passed over when he fled from his son Absalom; in this David was a type of Christ, as in other things:

- Absalom represented the people of the Jews, who rejected the Messiah, and rebelled against him;
- Ahithophel [David's faithful counselor, now turned to support his enemy], Judas, who betrayed him;
- and the people that went with David over it, the disciples of our Lord;

only there was this difference; there was a father fleeing from a son, here a son going to meet

his father's wrath

David's exile was the prototype of a king excluded from his own territory by his own people, and here the Lord Jesus deliberately imitates the event.

where was a garden.--The blood from the temple drained into the Kidron, making its banks extraordinarily fertile. 2 Kings 23:4 refers to "the fields of Kidron," and the first sheaf was reaped there for the firstfruits.

... his disciples. 2 And Judas also, which betrayed him ...--Note the juxtaposition. Judas had been one of the disciples. Now he is ranged against them. This is the ultimate expression of what it means for one who had been his own, not only a Jew but a disciple, to "receive him not."

Judas ... knew the place: for Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with his disciples.--The Lord deliberately goes to a place where he will be easy to find. Luke 21:37 tells us that each night during the passover week, the Lord lodged with his disciples "in the mount" of olives, perhaps camping in this very garden.

3 Judas then, having received a band of men.--Greek *speira*, the Roman cohort, the tenth part of a legion, ranging from 600 to 1000 men! This seems a large number, but in v. 12 their leader is called by the military title appropriate to this size group. These soldiers would be Romans.

and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees.--"Officers" here is the word used to designate the temple officials in 7:32, 45. These are Jews, and Matt 26:47 tells us that they were "a great multitude." The Lord has left his own place, and now those that ought to be his own people, the overseers of the temple where he should have been acclaimed as Messiah, lead an armed band to overthrow him.

Commentators sometimes suggest that the words are not used in their technical sense and that the group was much smaller. But the gospels seem at pains to emphasize how large it was. The Jewish leaders represented the threat posed by Jesus as a rival king (19:12), and no doubt used that excuse to persuade the Romans to reinforce their own officers, who in ch. 7 had been unsuccessful in arresting Jesus. The Romans were not patient with political upstarts. Their response was to deploy overwhelming force to crush any revolt before it could gain a foothold.

cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.--The lanterns and torches remind us that the pursuers come at night, offering another parallel to David's flight. Ahithophel, who betrayed David in counseling Absalom, in 2 Sam 17:1 urged that they pursue David "this night" instead of waiting for day.

The lesson of this first paragraph is to emphasize the culmination of 1:11. The king leaves his capital, pursued in anger by those who should have been his subjects. In the sequel, we will see the religious leaders of Jewry demanding his death and denying his authority.

It is too easy to read these events and condemn the Jews of the first century. Throughout the past 2000 years the Lord has come to his own places, the churches ostensibly built for his worship, only to find those who are called by his name, and who ought to be his own, rejecting him.

Our Lord warned of wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt 7:15). He taught

Matt 7:21-23 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I

never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Paul, writing around AD 57, less than thirty years after the resurrection, warned the elders at Ephesus,

Acts 20:28-31 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

These warnings began to come true even before the end of the first century, as witnessed by John himself in his epistles. It is perhaps significant that tradition associates John with Ephesus, the very city to whose elders Paul gave his warning.

1 John 2:18-19 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Too often, a church building, a place that is called the Lord's house, is the last place you will find those who are the Lord's own people. The true followers of Jesus in every age have been a pilgrim people, a minority, at best ignored by the organized church and at worst actively persecuted by it. John is warning us, "Don't be surprised when this happens. This is what happened to your Lord. The Jews and the temple rejected him as the Jewish Messiah; those who call themselves Christians will reject you. But if you are faithful unto death, he will give you a crown of life."

Jesus Confronts his Attackers, 4-9

4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them.--Note how he takes command of the situation. It's not the Roman captain who marches in and says, "Ok, which of you guys is Jesus of Nazareth?" Our Lord moves out to meet them.

Whom seek ye?--Compare 1:38, when Andrew and John come after Jesus and he asks them, "What seek ye?" Or the people in John 6:26, to whom he said, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." We are reminded that it is not enough just to come to Jesus. He probes our motives.

- The people in John 6 sought to use Jesus to gratify their lusts. There are those today who follow Jesus because they think it will make them happy or prosperous.
- The officers sought him in order to harm him. There are many who study "the historical Jesus," wishing to be perceived as devout, but actually challenging the record preserved of him in the gospels.
- Andrew and John were seeking something deeper, the answer to their spiritual questions. There may be a clue here in the pronouns—they were not seeking a "who," but a "what." Jesus emphasized repeatedly that he did not come to promote himself (8:50 "I seek not mine own glory," cf. 5:41; 7:18). His desire is to lead us, not to himself, but to the Father.

If you are seeking Jesus, you should answer the question of 1:38 as well. Just what is it that you desire

from him? Are you looking for prosperity, like the people in John 6? Are you seeking to destroy him, like the officials here? Or are you truly seeking the answer to your heart's need?

5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth.--They do not recognize him by sight. Their relation with him is completely impersonal, driven only by the job they have to do. There is a warning here for us in our relation to the Lord. Do we deal with him only as a formality, someone that a priest tells us we must acknowledge, but without recognizing him personally? Or do we know him personally?

Jesus saith unto them, I am *he*.--The Lord identifies himself.

And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.--This is the last reference in John to Judas. He has completed his purpose; he has delivered the Messiah into the hands of sinful men, and now he vanishes from the scene. The last we see of him, he is taking his stand, not with the disciples, but with those who have come with weapons to arrest and ultimately destroy the Lord.

6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am *he*, they went backward, and fell to the ground.--“I am he” served to identify him as the one they sought, but the expression is a little strange--note the italics on “he.” If it were just a phrase of identification, we would expect *autos ego eimi* as in Luke 24:39. Literally, he is saying, “I am.” This is the title that he claimed in 8:58, leading to their attempt to stone him. When we studied that passage, we saw that the expression is the translation of the Hebrew phrase *ani hu* that appears repeatedly in Isa 41-56, always as a divine title.

With this utterance he lifts the veil just a crack, allowing his divine glory to shine out and showing them who is really in control here. Calvin's observation is wonderful:

We may infer from this how dreadful and alarming to the wicked the voice of Christ will be, when he shall ascend his throne to judge the world. At that time he stood as a lamb ready to be sacrificed; his majesty, so far as outward appearance was concerned, was utterly gone; and yet when he utters but a single word, his armed and courageous enemies fall down. And what was the word? He thunders no fearful excommunication against them, but only replies, “It is I.” What then will be the result, when he shall come, not to be judged by a man, but to be the Judge of the living and the dead; not in that mean and despicable appearance but shining in heavenly glory, and accompanied by his angels? He intended, at that time, to give a proof of that efficacy which Isaiah ascribes to his voice. Among other glorious attributes of Christ, the Prophet relates that

he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and will slay the wicked by the breath of his lips, (Isaiah 11:4.)

7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye?--He almost seems to mock them. “Come on, fellows, what are you waiting for? Get up off the ground. Do you have business with me, or don't you?”

And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.--I imagine that their tone is rather more subdued now than the previous time they spoke. Clearly the one they confront is no ordinary peasant from one of the outlying provinces.

8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am *he*.--He continues to show himself in control, and a bit impatient with their indecision.

if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.--He deliberately excludes the disciples from the suffering that he will have to undergo. In the immediate context, he excludes them from his abuse at the hands of the soldiers. But he undergoes this suffering for a deeper purpose, to bear the Father's wrath

against sin, and his purpose there is again to spare us.

There is irony here. The soldiers should let the disciples go because he, not they, is the object of their search. But with the Father it is just the reverse. The Father's wrath seeks the sinful disciples, not the spotless Son of God, and he interposes himself.

9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.--This reference to 17:12 offers an interesting insight to what it means for something to be "fulfilled." In its context, 17:12 refers to *spiritual* preservation from apostasy. Judas fell away, but the rest were preserved. By contrast, our first instinct (given the presence of the soldiers) is to think that he is sparing them *physical* suffering, which would seem to trivialize the original saying rather than to fulfill it.

On further consideration, though, their lives were hardly spared such suffering. Tradition claims that all except John were martyred, and John himself suffered exile. But consider what happened to one who did not take advantage of the opportunity to flee, Peter. Confronted with threats far weaker than a cohort of Roman soldiers, he denied the Lord, and had to be restored spiritually.

It is more likely that John cites 17:12 here to remind us that the arrest of the disciples would have posed, not only a physical threat, but also a spiritual one analogous to the one faced by Judas. Later, after the coming of the Spirit, they would be able to face physical challenges far greater than swords and spears. But they are not ready for that yet, and the Savior will not suffer them to be tempted beyond that they are able (cf. 1 Cor 10:13). cf. Calvin,

the Evangelist does not speak merely of their bodily life, but rather means that Christ, sparing them for a time, made provision for their eternal salvation. Let us consider how great their weakness was; what do we think they would have done, if they had been brought to the test? While, therefore, Christ did not choose that they should be tried beyond the strength which he had given to them, he rescued them from eternal destruction.

His provision in this regard offers us an important lesson about the linkage of the physical and the spiritual. We are sometimes tempted to think that it doesn't matter what happens to us physically, as long as we remain faithful to the Lord. That is true—but it is also true that Satan can use physical events to trip us up spiritually. Thus Paul exhorts us (Rom 13:14),

make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Do not place yourself in physical circumstances that will lead to temptation. Do not expose yourself unnecessarily to things that might stimulate the flesh—sensual imagery that might lead to fornication, or intoxicants that might lead to drunkenness, or rich foods that might lead to gluttony. If your service to the Lord brings you into contact with such things, do not be afraid, for he is able to keep you. But if you bring them willingly into your life, you are tempting the Lord your God, just as our Lord would have done had he succumbed to Satan's invitation to cast himself off the pinnacle of the temple (Matt 4:7).

This second movement of the scene thus shows us that the Lord is in control, even in hostile and threatening circumstances, and urges us to rely on his protection in such cases.

Peter's Intervention, 10-11

10 Then Simon Peter having a sword.--A point of contact between John and the synoptics, which tell

us that they had two swords with them (Luke 22:38).

drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.--The Lord has just opened the door for the disciples to flee. Peter feels that such an action would be beneath him, and instead resolves to “go down fighting.”

Calvin has an excellent discussion of the danger of allowing our zeal to run ahead of the Word of God. At least three things are wrong here:

1. “in offering violence to the captain and the soldiers, he acts the part of a highwayman, because he resists the power which God has appointed” [but in doing so he fulfills the intent of the Lord's instruction to take swords in Luke 22:36]
2. “Christ having already been more than enough hated by the world, this single deed might give plausibility to all the calumnies which his enemies falsely brought against him.”
3. “it was exceedingly thoughtless in Peter to attempt to prove his faith by his sword, while he could not do so by his tongue. When he is called to make confession, he denies his Master; and now, without his Master's authority, he raises a tumult.”

It is a sign of the Lord's control over the situation that the soldiers do not respond violently to the show of a sword.

11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath.--The Lord rejects Peter's defense of him out of hand. In Matt 26:52-54, the motive for this rejection is threefold:

- The risk to Peter: “All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” If we, who are to be examples of godliness, take up the sword, we can hardly object when others respond in like manner. We should be very cautious about participating in an arms race. If we use the world's weapons, we should not be surprised if we become targets for their use by others.
- The availability of a superior mode of defense: “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” The history of the OT (Elishah at Dothan, 2 Kings 6:17) and the NT (consider Peter in Herod's prison, Acts 12) shows that this same defense is available to us as well.
- God's broader plan: “But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” This is the motive on which John focuses. God's plan sometimes requires that his children suffer and die, for a higher purpose. When we take up the sword, we challenge his wisdom and take matters into our own hand.

It is the purview of the magistrate to use force against people (Rom 13). I don't know of any passage that permits individuals to use force against other individuals, even in self-defense, and the Lord explicitly teaches that we are to turn the other cheek to those who would harm us (Matt 5:39). The use of force by ancient Israel is a function of their role as a nation as well as a spiritual group. Luke 22:36 must be interpreted in the light of v. 37, as a special symbolic action for that moment, and not a general instruction to believers.

the cup which my Father hath given me.--Though John does not record the agony in the garden, this clause reveals his knowledge of it. It contains John's only use of “cup,” a term recorded in all of the synoptics in the prayer of agony.

shall I not drink it?--As in Matt 16:22-23, Peter's good intentions place him in conflict with the Father's plan, and warn us of the danger of unbridled zeal. There, when the Lord spoke of his mission

to go to Jerusalem and be slain, Peter sought to forbid him with words. Now he seeks to block the outcome with action. Calvin:

as the wantonness of our flesh is always eager to attempt more than God commands, let us learn that our zeal will succeed ill, whenever we venture to undertake any thing contrary to the word of God.

Jesus before the Priests, 18:12-27

This scene moves back into Jerusalem, “his own place,” which has now become completely and openly hostile against our Lord. To emphasize this, John records how the place corrupts even one of his closest disciples. After introducing the main actors, the scene is a chiasm that shifts between the opposition of the priests and the denial of Peter.

Context, 12-14

12 Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him.--John is a painter to record the responsibility of both the Roman soldiers and the Jewish leaders.

13 And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.--Now the Lord returns across the Kidron to Jerusalem, “his own place.” The contrast with David is worthy of note.

- David returned as king to rule, at the invitation of the people.
- Our Lord returns in bonds to face the condemnation of the high priests.

14 Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.--John reminds us of Caiaphas' prophecy in 11:49, to make it clear that the Lord's arrest is part of God's greater purpose.

To understand what's going on, we need to know something about the Jewish high priesthood in the first century. You can learn about background like this from a good commentary or a Bible dictionary.

Under Jewish law, the high priesthood was for life (cf. Num 35:25, 28), unless some unworthiness emerged (1 Kings 2:26, 35), but the Romans took control of the office and assigned it as perk. Annas was high priest from 7 to 15 AD, succeeded by his son and then his son-in-law Caiaphas. Note the wording here and in 11:49, “high priest that same year.” The implication is that the office could change frequently.

Caiaphas held the office of high priest throughout the ministry of our Lord and the early years of the church (18-36 AD), but Luke twice calls Annas High Priest even after the ascension of Caiaphas (Luke 3:2; Acts 4:6). It appears that Annas was the “power behind the throne.”

This is important because in what follows we have frequent references to “the high priest,” but without any name. John and the Synoptics both describe an interrogation of the Lord in “the palace of the high priest” (v. 15; Matt 23:6; Mark 14:54, 66). Yet the interrogations appear to be different:

John	Synoptics
A single interrogator, the high priest (with servants in attendance, v. 22)	The whole council gathered together
The Lord appeals to true witnesses	The Jews suborn false witnesses
Focus on his “disciples and doctrine,” v. 19	Focus on the destruction of the temple and title as Son of God
The Lord does not answer, but refers to his public teaching, vv. 20-21.	The Lord does answer: “I am [the Christ, the son of the Blessed]: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”
Lord smitten because of refusal to answer the high priest	Lord smitten because his answers were considered blasphemy , and to taunt him

In addition, there is no basis for the perfect tense in v. 24, which is best understood as placing the interview with Caiaphas (as official high priest and therefore head of the Sanhedrin) after that with Annas.

The best synthesis appears to be that

- Annas held a preliminary investigation to enable him to “manage” the subsequent official hearing
- Jesus refused to cooperate with this unofficial interview, and answered openly only before the Sanhedrin
- both hearings were held in the same palace, in which Annas and Caiaphas perhaps had separate apartments.

Peter's First Denial, 15-18

15 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.--As elsewhere in John, the unnamed “mystery disciple” is usually understood to be the evangelist. How was he known to the high priest? Two theories have been suggested, both supported by early written tradition and both consistent with (though not required by) biblical data:

- He may have been a priest, and served periodically in the temple;
- The firm of Zebedee and Sons may have supplied dried fish to the high priest's household.

For details on these, see John Wenham, *The Easter Enigma* (Paternoster, 1984).

This would explain how John knows the name of the servant of the high priest whose ear Peter cut off.

16 But Peter stood at the door without.--Compare the image in Acts 12:13-14—Peter outside the door, his admittance depending on a young girl.

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.--It was through John's intervention that Peter actually gained entrance into the building. He would have been happier had he remained outside, for by entering he fell into the sin that the Lord predicted in 13:38, his threefold betrayal of the Lord.

17 Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter.--This is the one to whom John spoke.

Art not thou also *one of this man's disciples?*--Two details of her question bear notice.

- To whom does the “also” refer? It appears in all four gospels, but only John's gives a clear answer. She no doubt recognized John as associated with the Lord. Because John knows Peter, she wonders whether Peter is also a disciple. Evidently, John was not afraid to be identified with the Lord even in his humiliation. The comparison is hardly favorable to Peter. He was not there alone, but with another who was already recognized as a disciple, and yet he still was overcome by fear.
- The question is phrased in a way that expects a negative answer. “You're not one of this man's disciples, are you?” This suggests how Peter was lured into denying the Lord. Was the fact that the question came from a damsel influential? Imagine her sneering at John, then smiling up at Peter with big dark eyes and saying, “These Galileans are a gullible, hopeless lot. You're not one of them too, are you?” When the enemy comes at us in a frontal attack, directly challenging us, we may stand for the Lord out of pure zeal. But when the world acts friendly toward us and assumes that we are part of it, it takes the power of the Spirit to reject its overtures.

He saith, I am not.--How easy it was just to accept her suggestion and say, “Uh, no, of course not.”

18 And the servants and officers stood there.--The “servants” are slaves, members of the high priest's household. The “officers” were the temple officials from whose ranks the leaders had sent some to arrest the Lord in ch. 7 at the feast of tabernacles, and who had returned empty-handed. The same group had come to arrest the Lord in the previous section. No doubt Peter saw some familiar faces here, and that would have made him afraid and repelled him. But...

who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves:--It was a cold evening. Here was a warm fire. He was repelled by the people he feared, but attracted by the fire. Having stumbled once with the girl, misled by her leading question, he ought to have reevaluated his own weakness and withdrawn. But the flesh wanted the comfort of the fire.

Here is a paradigm of temptation. We know our weakness. Perhaps we have already begun to slip. We ought to seek the Lord's help and withdraw ourselves from the place of temptation, as Joseph did from Potiphar's house. But the flesh pulls us in.

and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.--Eventually the lust of the flesh won out, and he drew near.

Contrast 21:9, 12. To come to the Lord's fire is blessing and fulfillment, but to come to the world's is the way to sin.

We know what's about to happen, but John dramatically switches the scene and takes us into Annas' chambers where the preliminary inquest is underway.

Jesus before Annas, 19-24

This section is not a peer to Peter's denial, but subordinate to it, as indicated by the external inclusion between v. 18 and v.25. The significance of this section to Peter's denial is discussed below.

19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.--He seeks two lines of accusation against him, corresponding to the two institutions that conspired to destroy the Lord.

- Specifics about his disciples would enable Annas to portray the Lord to the **Romans** as an insurrectionist, one who was leading others into rebellion.
- Information about his doctrine would support theological condemnation from the **Sanhedrin**.

20 Jesus answered him.--The Lord's response is to volunteer no information. Later, before the Sanhedrin, he will say something of his doctrine, confessing himself to be the son of God. But he recognizes that this inquest is illegal and out of order, and refuses to cooperate with it. In particular, he will not bear witness against himself, but urges Annas to prove any charges with witnesses, as the law requires.

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.--He did sometimes instruct his disciples in private (e.g., Mark 4:10), but this was only to explain what he had revealed publicly. Even that, he had instructed his disciples to make public:

Matt 10:27 What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops.

This claim of the Lord is an important correction to the errors of the gnostics and many later cults, which emphasize the importance of secret knowledge available only to the initiated. Our Savior's doctrine is open and plain. The challenge of biblical Christianity is not in understanding obscure, hidden doctrines, but in submitting our sinful will to God.

21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.--Here is a direct challenge to bring forth witnesses, as required by the law.

22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand.--Again, the "officers" are the group sent to arrest the Lord in ch. 7. They were afraid to confront the Lord then, but now that he is bound and in private, they become bold, showing their character as bullies.

This little interchange contains an important lesson on the attitude we should have toward those who flaunt the trappings of priestcraft.

saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?--Like many parishioners, the officer is so awed by the person of the priest that he deems any opposition to him to be *de facto* wrong.

23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?--The Lord turns his attention away from deference to a clergyman, and toward the merits of the case. What matters in issues of religion is not a person's qualifications, but the truth or falsehood of what is said.

Contrast Paul's emotional response to the high priest in a similar situation in Acts 23:3, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall," for which he later apologized. The Savior's words are forceful, but not disrespectful.

Jesus before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, 24

24 Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.--Delete "had." At this point, the hearing before the Sanhedrin, recorded in the synoptics but passed over by John, takes place.

Once again, John shows his intent to complement the synoptics, omitting something that they discuss

but presenting other information that relates to it.

Peter's Second and Third Denials, 25-27

25 And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself.--John brings our attention back to Peter at the charcoal fire in the palace courtyard.

They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also *one* of his disciples?--Again, the form of the question expects a negative answer.

He denied *it*, and said, I am not.--Again, Peter takes the easy way, and gives the answer expected by the question.

26 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?--This question is different from the previous two. It is based on a direct observation of Peter with the Lord, rather than idle chit-chat, and it expects a positive answer. The previous two assumed that Peter, like the speaker, was not one of the disciples. This one assumes that he is. If this had been the first question rather than the third, Peter might have responded appropriately. But by this time Peter is so firmly entrenched in his denial that he cannot back out.

27 Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.--Thus he fulfills the Lord's prophecy in 13:38.

The other gospels go on to relate Peter's heartbroken tears. John leaves us in suspense, to prepare us for the restoration in ch. 21.

Analysis of the Chiasm

John is the only gospel to divide the denial of Peter. The synoptics present it as a unit. Here is Edersheim's reconstruction of the sequence of events, together with the items in each of the gospels.

Event (likely sequence)	Matt	Mark	Luke 22	John 18
Peter's first denial	2 (26:69-70)	2 (14:67-68)	1 (56-57)	1 (15-18)
Annas' private inquisition				2 (19-24)
Peter's second denial	3 (26:71-72)	3 (14:69-70)	2 (58)	4 (25)
Sanhedrin's night hearing	1 (26:59-68)	1 (14:53-65)	4 (63-65)	3 (24)
Peter's third denial	4 (26:73-74)	4 (14:70-71)	3 (59-60)	5 (26-27)
Sanhedrin's morning conviction	5 (27:1)	5 (15:1)	5 (66-71)	

Why does John divide the denials? It might be no more than attention to chronological order., but the external inclusio between vv. 18 and 25 suggests otherwise. By flipping back and forth between Peter and the priestly interrogations, the chiasm has the effect of forcing us to compare the two series of events.

- Both Jesus and Peter are under interrogation.
- Both Jesus and Peter refuse to answer.

- Jesus' refusal was legally correct: it was up to witnesses to condemn or acquit him.
- Peter's refusal was incorrect; he had just been charged with the need to “bear witness” (15:27).
- Jesus expects his hearers to bear witness to his words (v. 21), which is what Peter refuses to do.
- The focus of the synoptics is on the false testimony of those who knew nothing but still spoke. The focus in John is on the missing testimony of one (Peter) who knew much but did not speak.

Jesus is still on trial today, by a hostile world. To them, as to Annas, he says, “Ask them which heard me.” There are many false witnesses who are eager to rise up and pervert his teaching. Where are the voices of those who have truly heard him? Peter failed in this task, but after the coming of the Spirit, he bore testimony boldly. May we yield to the direction and enabling of the same Spirit in bearing witness for our Lord.

Jesus before Pilate, 18:28-19:16a

28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment.--It would be during this transfer, after all three of Peter's denials, that the Lord looked with rebuke on Peter (Luke 22:61).

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.--This verse requires our attention from two perspectives, chronological and theological.

Chronologically, it has been understood to put John in contradiction with the synoptics.

- They uniformly represent the Last Supper as a passover meal (most clearly, see Mark 14:12, “the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, 'Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?'”).
- Yet here the Jewish leaders want to avoid ritual defilement so “that they might eat the passover.”

The best solution to the problem is to recognize that there is probably no conflict, after all. This conclusion rests on three considerations:

1. “Passover” can refer not only to the Seder, but to the entire feast of unleavened bread, which occupied the following week (Luke 22:1, “Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the passover”).
2. The Seder was not the only festival meal in this season. On the first day of unleavened bread, the festival sacrifice, the *xagiga*, was offered (see Edersheim for details and references to Jewish literature), and had to be eaten the same day.
3. Defilement lasts only for one day. The oft-repeated instruction in Leviticus 11 and 15 is that a defiled person “shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even.” Edersheim offers references to Jewish teaching that someone who is defiled during the day may undergo a ritual bath and then partake of the passover that same evening (which is the next day). So the defilement of entering a Gentile building would not have kept the Jews from eating the Seder, but it would have excluded them from the *xagiga*, which was eaten that same calendrical day.

So it appears that John agrees with the synoptics that the Seder was the night before, and we are now on the first day of unleavened bread.

Theologically, the verse highlights the hypocrisy of the Jews. They are preoccupied with avoiding ceremonial defilement from the Gentiles, but unconcerned about the far greater moral defilement incurred by plotting the unjust destruction of one of their own, and in particular, their Messiah. This verse is John's counterpart to Matthew's record of the Lord's condemnation of the hypocrisy of the scribes and pharisees (ch. 23), a repeated record of how they are satisfied with ceremonial correctness to the neglect of true inner righteousness.

It is facile to scorn their blindness, but we should rather take the verse as a solemn warning about the danger that ritualism poses to anyone. There are certain patterns that we follow as believers—the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the emphasis on daily prayer and Bible reading, the importance of meeting together regularly. And we ought to do these things. But they are the foundation of our spirituality, not its apex. The real point is godliness, Christlikeness, complete moral conformity to every aspect of God's law. May he protect us from being satisfied with the rituals and overlooking the “weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith” (Matt 23:23).

29 Pilate then went out unto them.--Because they refuse to come into the judgment hall, he must shuttle back and forth between his official place of business and the porch. This is our first view of Pilate, and already we see him as subservient to the Jews, a striking contrast to the magisterial conduct of the Lord Jesus.

In addition to showing Pilate's weakness, this movement, which happens four times in all (vv. 29, 38; 19:4, 13) serves to divide the overall scene into eight parts: four outside, and four inside. (The second and fourth “inside” pieces are not explicitly stated to be inside, but this would be a consistent way to understand them.) Pilate is always present, but the other characters alternate between the Jews and Jesus.

The handout shows an alternation between the first four parts and the last four. In both cases, and in this order,

1. The Jews raise an accusation against Jesus (“malefactor,” “he made himself the Son of God”), while Pilate tries to avoid taking the case (“Take ye him...”).
2. Pilate interrogates Jesus (“Art thou the king of the Jews?” “Whence art thou?”), who claims a higher authority (“not of this world,” “from above”).
3. Pilate presents Jesus to the Jews as their king, but they reject him in favor of an alternative (Barabbas; Caesar).
4. Pilate surrenders Jesus to unjust abuse (scourging, crucifixion).

The importance of this alternation is that it identifies two cycles of Pilate's interaction with the Jews. 19:19-22 will be a third, and in all three, he presents Jesus as the King of the Jews (18:39; 19:14, 19). In spite of the grievous miscarriage of justice over which he presides, he fares better than Peter, who has just denied the Lord three times. In fact, it is likely that John intends us to associate Pilate's three confessions with Peter's three denials, to show that the Lord will have his praise, in spite of our sin. Compare Phil 2:10-11, which promises that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, even of those “under the earth,” the damned. Pilate's behavior shows his corruption, but in spite of that he must confess that Jesus is the King of the Jews.

First Accusation, 18:29-32

What accusation bring ye against this man?--A not unreasonable place to start. It shows that Pilate intends to hold an official hearing.

This move no doubt surprised the Jews. Pilate had already granted them a detachment of soldiers to support the arrest. They assumed that he would go along with their program, and are disappointed that he now wants to make the outcome contingent on his own investigation. This context explains the curtness of their response.

30 ... If he were not a malefactor.--Luke 23:2 makes it clear what kind of malefactor they have in mind:

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.

John's record of the interrogation shows that he is fully aware of this charge, for this is the question with which Pilate begins in v. 33. Why then does he not record their charge initially?

The answer may lie in the contrast that John is drawing between Peter's denial and Pilate's growing confession of Jesus as the king of the Jews. John is emphasizing that Pilate's references to Jesus as the king are not just a neutral reaction to the Jewish charge, but the result of a growing conviction on his own part. Note the Lord's challenges to him in 18:34 "Sayest thou this thing of thyself?" and 37 "Thou sayest that I am a king," and Pilate's defiant proclamation in v. 19. Some later traditions record that he became a believer.

we would not have delivered him up unto thee.--Their choice of word is telling. Up to this point in the gospel, this Greek term *paradidwmi* has been translated "betray," and used only of Judas' action. Judas, one of the twelve, was of the closest circle of "his own" who "received him not." Now the official representatives of the people explicitly reject him. We will see more interesting things emerge from this word as we go along.

31 Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.--Pilate is playing with them. He will not be a pushover for them. If they are unwilling to have him try the case, let them handle it. Of course, he knows full well that they cannot exact the penalty that they desire, as the Jews immediately acknowledge:

The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.--Josephus (Wars 2.117) records that the Romans reserved to themselves the right of capital punishment. The Jews want Jesus dead, but only the Romans can lawfully execute a man. True, they later stoned Stephen, but that was mob violence, for which they might have been punished by Rome. So they must let Pilate have his hearing.

Their admission ought to have given them pause. Jacob had prophesied nearly two millennia before (Gen 49:10),

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

Now that they have, by their own admission, lost the sceptre and lawgiver, they ought to be looking for the Messiah.

32 That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should

die.--Jewish execution would have been by stoning. The Lord had prophesied (3:14; 12:32-33) that he would be “lifted up,” that is, in crucifixion. John is reminding us that in the face of abounding sin—of Judas, of the Jews, of Peter, of Pilate—the Lord is still in control. Similarly, when we find ourselves disadvantaged by the sin of others, we should not be tempted to retaliate in kind. The Lord is in control.

First Interrogation, 18:33-38a

33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again and called Jesus.--The change in place (from the porch to the judgment hall) and characters (from the Jews to Jesus) marks the shift in the discourse from accusation to interrogation.

Pilate ... said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?--By omitting the Jewish accusation, John emphasizes to us that this is a question that had no doubt on Pilate's mind. Luke (23:8) tells us that Herod had heard of Jesus and wanted to see him, and Pilate very likely was in a similar situation.

34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?--Even as the defendant in a capital case, the Lord challenges Pilate to go beyond what others say and consider his own response to the Messiah. His challenge is akin to that posed by Priscilla to John Alden, who was offering a proposal on behalf of Miles Standish while his own heart was full of love for her: “Why don't you speak for yourself, John?” As Roman procurator, Pilate must examine the charge that the Jews have brought, but the Lord urges him to consider his own personal response to the claims of Christ.

35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew?--Pilate is indignant at the suggestion that he should have any personal interest in the Lord's claims—yet in the sequel, in fact he does “say this thing” of himself.

By calling attention to his race, he is trying to imply that of course he would not be interested in a Jewish king. Yet he does not deny his personal interest outright.

Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me.--He hides behind their accusation.

What hast thou done?--Pilate knows that the Jews are not such loyal subjects of Rome that they would get all wrought up about someone posing as a rival king. There must be something deeper to their animosity. What is it that Jesus has done to stimulate such hatred?

36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.--Pilate asked two questions in v. 35. The first was only rhetorical, an attempt to get off the hook of the Lord's challenge in 34. The second is more appropriate to his investigation.

The Lord's response to the second question is that he has a kingdom. He is a king. But he quickly moves on to respond to the first question as well. Pilate's race and nationality don't matter, because the kingdom over which the Lord has authority is not of this world. Thus its claims extend to Romans as well as to Jews.

if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews.--This statement addresses “What hast thou done?” The important thing for Pilate to know is what Jesus has *not* done: he has not instigated a rebellion. He is not amassing an army or using force to challenge the existing order. John's teaching here is consistent with his rebuke of Peter's use of the sword, and with his instructions in the Sermon on the Mount that believers are to turn the other cheek to those who would harm them.

but now is my kingdom not from hence.--The “now” is not chronological, but logical. “In fact, in contrast to the supposition that I pose an armed political threat,” His kingdom does not have its origin in this world, but in heaven.

37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then?--Pilate understands the implication of the Lord's response. The issue is the Lord's kingship, not his ethnic association. As a king, he has authority over Pilate.

Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king.--The Lord's response to Pilate is an affirmation. Note the use of the expression to Judas in Matt 26:65,

Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

Compare Matt 26:64 with Mark 14:62:

Matt 26:63-64	Mark 14:61-62
63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.	61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?
64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said:	62 And Jesus said, I am:
nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.	and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Yet it does something more: it is an affirmation that pushes the responsibility back on the person to whom he is speaking, like our expression, “You know very well that I am.” The Lord is continuing to press the point of v. 34. As much as he wants to be a detached professional, Pilate cannot avoid the personal force of the Lord's claims.

To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.--At first glance, it's not clear what this statement has to do with kingship, which is the subject of Pilate's question. Three observations will help us make the connection.

1. The pronoun “I” comes first, and contrasts with “thou sayest.” “Your way of putting the matter, which I will not deny, is that I am a king. As for me, I view my role as bearing witness to the truth.”
2. What does bearing witness to the truth have to do with being a king? The answer may lie in the law of the king that Moses gave in Deut 17:14-20. This law makes the king's first responsibility to know and promulgate the law of the Lord. Jesus' kingship is faithful to this requirement. In other words, the Lord wants to clarify that his kingship, unlike the kingship with which Pilate may be acquainted, is founded on and subject to a higher truth.
3. The emphasis on his birth is appropriate for a king, since kingship is a hereditary office. But the Lord goes further: he not only was born, but “came ... into the world,” asserting his prior existence.

Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.--Here is an implicit invitation to Pilate. Jesus' subjects are those who hear him. He has already said the same thing to the Jews:

8:47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God.

10:26-27 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

Now he says the same thing to a Gentile. In doing so, he is fulfilling his own statement of 10:16,

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.

He is presenting his claims as king, not only over the Jews, but over all men, and challenging Pilate to consider them.

38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?--Pilate is on the spot. Jesus has presented himself as king over the realm of God's truth. If Pilate is truthful, he must be subject to Jesus. Instead, he falls back on a philosophical quibble and denies the existence of ultimate truth.

His response is a common one today. People sense the intrinsic authority of the claims of Christ. They are unwilling to submit to him, and they retreat into relativism.

First Presentation to the Jews, 18:38b-40

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.--Here is Pilate's official verdict. Not only did the Jews not have a specific accusation (vv. 29-30), but Pilate finds nothing amiss. Gill: "it shows ... that he died not for any sin of his own, but for the sins of others."

39 But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover:--Pilate is seeking for some way to release Jesus without instigating a riot. He knows that the Lord is innocent, yet as governor of an unstable province, he must keep the people calm. His first attempt is to brand Jesus as a malefactor by making him the object of the annual release of a prisoner. This is not the same as releasing him as innocent; the implication would be that he is a criminal, but released as a sign of clemency by Rome.

Calvin notes in passing the inappropriateness of such a custom:

Prov 17:15 He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both *are* abomination to the LORD.

Here Solomon condemns both Pilate's attempted means of releasing Jesus, and the ultimate outcome.

will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?--Pilate presents him for the first time to the Jews as their king. His tone is somewhat mocking, but as we have seen, he is wrestling deeply with the Lord's claims.

40 Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas.--They announce their preference for someone in the Lord's place, an action they will repeat in 19:15, when they choose Caesar over the Lord.

A fundamental condition of following the Lord Jesus is that we choose him over all others:

Matt 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

In fact, this requirement derives from the OT law, Deut 6:5,

thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Whenever we choose someone else, or something else, over the Lord, we are guilty of idolatry.

Now Barabbas was a robber.--To make matters worse, the one they chose was a true criminal. The synoptics tell us that he was not just a petty thief, but one guilty of insurrection and murder—the very kind of person whom the Jews made Jesus out to be. This wicked man goes free, while Jesus is condemned.

There may be a deeper irony in this event, for the freeing of Barabbas is a parable of our experience, guilty sinners set free because another dies for the charge of which we are guilty. In fact, the name “Barabbas” means “son of the Father,” anticipating the condition that we enjoy by virtue of the Lord's redemptive work.

First Abuse, 19:1-3

19:1 Then Pilate therefore took Jesus,--We know from the synoptics (Matt 27:27; Mark 15:16) that he goes back into the judgment hall. John shows this knowledge by stating in v. 4 that he comes out again.

and scourged him.--Pilate has just declared Jesus innocent. Why, then, does he have him scourged?

- Scourging was usually preparatory to crucifixion, and Matt and Mark present it in this way. But John shows that Pilate has not yet decided to crucify Jesus, and he will shortly again insist on his innocence (19:4). (This must therefore be a separate scourging from that in the synoptics.)
- Luke 23:22 shows that this scourging is a second attempt to compromise with the Jews. He will chastise Jesus, but then release him, hoping that the Jews will be satisfied with the lesser penalty.
- But on a larger scale, the ultimate reason is beyond his ken. “It pleased the Lord to bruise him” (Isa 53:10). Pilate's futile schemings lead directly to the fulfillment of Isa 53:5, “with his stripes we are healed.” Compare Acts 4:27-28,

For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, 3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.--They understand that the charge for which Jesus is on trial is the claim to be king. Surely they are unaware of the deep symbolism in the crown that they fashion for him, from the thorns that flourished because of Adam's sin, Gen 3:17-18,

cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; 18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee;

In bearing this crown, the Lord takes upon himself the curse that came upon the whole earth because of our first parents' sin.

Second Accusation, 19:4-8

4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.--One common purpose of scourging was to extort a confession. Pilate can claim to have tried his best to find a basis for condemnation, without success.

Pilate's verdict, in English, sounds the same as in 18:38. But there is an important difference.

- Previously, the pronoun “I” came first. The emphasis was on Pilate's authority. “I, the Roman governor, find no fault in him.” You Jews may, but I don't.
- Now, the phrase “in him” comes first. The emphasis is on Jesus. “In him I find no fault.” The implication is that there are some in the company with whom he does find fault—compare the use of the same emphatic position in the words of the thief in Luke 23:41, “this man [in contrast to us] hath done nothing amiss.” Presumably these are the Jews, whose obvious hatred for Jesus shows even to Pilate the hypocrisy of their pious veneer of ceremonial purity.

5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!--With a theatrical flourish, Pilate seeks to persuade the people that he has done enough. But they are insatiable.

6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.--The Jews had stated at the outset (18:31b) their objective to see Jesus dead.

Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him:--He is speaking ironically. Of course, they have no authority to do anything of the kind. But the point is that if he is to die, it must be at their hands, for the reason given in the next clause.

for I find no fault in him.--A third time Pilate declares the Lord's innocence. Just as Peter denies him thrice, Pilate thrice acquits him and thrice declares him to be the King of Israel. This time, as the first, Pilate places the pronoun “I” in the emphatic frontal position, insisting on his authority to make such a declaration, and once again contrasting his judgment with that of the Jews.

7 The Jews answered him, We have a law,--It was the responsibility of the Roman governor to enforce local laws as well as Rome's statutes. The Jews now instruct him on this aspect of his duty.

and by our law he ought to die.--Presumably Lev 24:16, “And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, *and* all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name *of the LORD*, shall be put to death.” We know from the synoptics (Matt 26:65; Mark 14:64) that the the Jews took Lord's claim to be the Son of the Highest as blasphemy.

because he made himself the Son of God.--Up to this point they were relying on the charge of treason to induce Rome to eliminate Jesus for Rome's reasons. Now they abandon their charade and admit their true complaint. The real issue is not that Jesus is a “malefactor” (18:30) in Rome's eyes, but that his claim to be the Son of God violates their own law.

The charges are related; the Messiah would be both Son of God and ruler of the earth (Ps 2:7-8 “thou art my son”; cf. 2 Sam 7:14 “I will be his father, and he shall be my son”). But these very prophecies shows that the claim to be the Son of God is not in itself blasphemous, since the Messiah would hold this title legitimately. Their real objection is not that it is illegitimate for a man to be called God's son, but that they do not accept Jesus as the promised Messiah. In asserting “he made himself,” they reject his claim as spurious.

8 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid.--He was already unnerved by the Lord's magisterial conduct in the first interrogation, and his claims to have a "kingdom ... not of this world" (18:36) and that he "came ... into the world." Roman superstition was rife with accounts of demi-gods, god-men with supernatural powers. Pilate has just had this man flogged. What if his attempts to mollify the Jews put him on the wrong side of the issue?

Second Interrogation, 19:9-12

9 And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou?--Pilate seeks to allay his fears about the possibility that he is dealing with a divine character.

But Jesus gave him no answer.--Our Lord's silence has at least two motives:

- His own principle not to cast his pearls before swine (Matt 7:6), not to give further revelation to one whose heart is hardened
- The fulfillment of Isa 53:7,

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me?--The "me" comes first. He may know of the Lord's silence before the Jews (18:19-20; Matt 26:63; Mark 14:61). But surely the prisoner will not refuse to answer him, the one with the ultimate power of life and death.

knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?--"Power" here means authority. It falls within his purview as Roman governor either to kill or to release. He expects that the prisoner, recognizing this authority, would be cowed and deferential before him.

11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above:--The Greek grammar (disagreement in gender between feminine "power" and neuter "it were given") shows that what has been given to Pilate from above is not the authority, but his situation of being in authority. The Lord is not referring to the principle of Rom 13 or Dan 4:32, as true as that principle is. It is not the power, but the possession of that power, that God has given Pilate. The statement deals not with the abstract authority of the civil ruler, but the current configuration, that Pilate happens to be the governor of Judaea at this time, that the Jews have taken Jesus and given him to Pilate, and that Pilate now sits in judgment over Jesus. All this is the outworking of God's sovereign purpose, Acts 4:27-28,

For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

he that delivered me unto thee.--"Delivered" is the word we saw in 18:30, 35, of what the Jews did to Jesus. It is the word frequently translated "betrayed" in describing Judas. But Judas had nothing to do with Pilate; the reference here must be to Caiaphas, who had determined upon the death of Jesus in 11:49-50, and on that grounds initiated the arrest (cf. 18:14).

therefore he ... hath the greater sin.--Why is Caiaphas' sin greater than Pilate's? Because of the difference in the roles in which God has cast them. Pilate is simply the civil authority who happens to wield the power of life and death in this case. Caiaphas, as John has reminded us in 11:51, was "high

priest that year,” God's representative to the Jewish people. Pilate was responsible for discerning malefactors from innocent people; Caiaphas was responsible for recognizing the Messiah. Both abdicated their responsibility, but Caiaphas' God-given responsibility was greater, and so is the sin of abusing it. “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:48). Compare James' warning (3:1), “my brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”

This statement is a tremendous put-down to Pilate. Pilate wants Jesus to think that he has more power than the Jews. Jesus replies that the Jews in fact have a higher divine authority than he does, though they, like he, are abusing their position. Both of them serve only by heaven's permission, the same heaven from which he has come.

12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him:--Pilate has become firmly persuaded that he should free Jesus. At the same time, the pressure from the Jews grows greater and greater. He is torn between two forces that grow increasingly strong—his own conviction that Jesus is innocent (or even more, the true king of the Jews), and his fear of the political consequences should he free Jesus.

but the Jews cried out,--Pilate is still in the judgment hall. We are to picture the Jews yelling so loudly that their voice penetrates the building.

If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend.--It is useful to examine this phrase both historically and biblically.

Historically, by the time of Vespasian (AD 70), this had become a fixed title for a special position of honor in the court. We know from other sources that Pilate was an ambitious bureaucrat, seeking to climb the ladder of prestige. He was a protégé of Aelius Sejanus, of whom the historian Tacitus said, “Intimacy with Sejanus was in every case a powerful recommendation to the emperor's friendship” (Annals 6.8). But two years before, Sejanus had fallen from power and been executed, along with many who were associated with him, and his former friends were scurrying for cover. A political schemer like Caiaphas would be likely to collect such tidbits. Here he reminds Pilate how precarious his position is. A report back from the provinces of how he let a pretender to rival kingship go free would not sit well in Rome, particularly if he were under suspicion already because of his relation with Sejanus.

But there is a deeper sense of the expression in John's gospel. Just a few hours before, the Lord explained to his disciples (15:14, 15),

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. 15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

The issues that confronts Pilate is not just his political future. He must choose between being a friend of the emperor of Rome and a friend of the king of heaven. James will later make this choice explicit (4:4),

Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

It is a mistake to think that you can satisfy the world's requirements and still be faithful to the Lord Jesus. At some point, sooner or later, you will have to choose. Pilate, at least because of his ambition, and perhaps from fear for his life, choose to pursue the friendship of Caesar, and as a result forfeited the friendship of the Lord.

whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.--They are back to their initial accusation, that the Lord claims royal status. Note the expression, “maketh himself a king,” just as in v.7 they accuse, “he made himself the Son of God.” Their claim is that he has arrogated these titles to himself.

Second Presentation to the Jews, 19:13-15

13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.--We have here three descriptions of where Pilate sat to give judgment. Each has its own significance.

- “The judgment seat” indicates that he is ready to render his official decision. Enough bantering.
- “The pavement” is the Greek word *lithostratos*, “stone pavement.” Why should John record this detail? A clue may lie in the LXX usage of the word. It is rare, used only three times in the LXX. It appears once in Esther 1:6 to describe the court of Ahasuerus, and once in the Song of Solomon to describe Solomon's chariot as being “paved with love.” But the third is probably more appropriate here. 2 Chr 7:1-3 describes the dedication of Solomon's temple. Fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple, and the people

bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement *lithostratos*, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.

The traditional location of the governor's residence was adjacent to the temple. John may want his readers to contrast the arrogant behavior of Caiaphas and his cohorts at the temple *lithostratos* with the worship offered there a thousand years before in Solomon's day.

- “Gabbatha” is probably Aramaic *gab baita* “the elevation of the house,” mentioned in the Talmud as a location in the temple. The expression “mountain of the house of the Lord” appears in Isa 2:2, quoted in Micah 4:1, as the place to which all nations will flow in the last day.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the **mountain of the LORD'S house** shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 And **he shall judge** among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

There is no direct citation here. “Mountain” is Hebrew *har*, and even the Targum uses *tur* rather than *gab* here, but the name was evidently an established one, and John may be mentioning it to draw another contrast, this time focusing on Pilate. He is rejecting Jesus, but the time will come when all nations will come to this very place to worship him.

All that the narrative requires is the first title. John mentions the other two because of their irony, in showing first the sinfulness of the Jewish leaders, and second the reversal that Pilate's successors will face in one day sitting **under** judgment where he now sits **in** judgment.

14 And it was the preparation of the passover.--Recall the chronological discussion of 18:28. The *seder* was the night before. "Preparation" was a technical term for the day before the Sabbath, virtually equivalent to "Friday" (Mark 15:42 "it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath"). This is the Friday that fell during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was commonly called the "Passover" (Luke 22:1).

and about the sixth hour.--John is preoccupied with time references; uses "hour" more often than any other book in the Greek Bible. Mark 15:25 says that the Lord was crucified at the third hour, or mid-morning. The discrepancy has occupied a great deal of attention.

One common supposition (due to Westcott) is that John reckons time the Roman way, starting at midnight, while the Synoptics start at dawn, so that this is 6 AM, and the crucifixion took place three hours later at 9 AM. This is possible, but the counting of hours was based on the sundial, and there is no evidence that hours were ever counted from midnight.

Some have suggested an early scribal error in John. If an early manuscript used uncial Gamma Γ for 3, but digamma (our 'F') for six, confusion would be very easy. But there is no manuscript evidence.

The most common explanation today (Morris, Carson) is that the time divisions are approximate. Certainly people were approximate in their noting of time in antiquity. Mark follows Peter, who was not particularly coherent at this point, following his denial of the Lord, and simply noted that it was full day, the third hour or later. John, who followed the Lord to the house of Caiaphas and may have gone on to the praetorium, could have had his eye on a Roman sundial. The problem is that it is John, not Mark, who marks his estimate as approximate.

None of these solutions is completely satisfactory. But one can offer a suggestion. John's reference to "the sixth hour" may be intended to draw our attention, not to the clock, but to other instances of "the sixth hour." John does not mean to deny that the crucifixion actually began at mid-morning, but he wants to emphasize the similarity of events with others that took place "about the sixth hour," in full daylight. Two come to mind.

1. In 4:6, it is the time (again cited approximately) when the Lord encountered the woman at the well in Samaria. She and Pilate are the two Gentiles with whom the Lord deals in John. She responded in faith; Pilate turned away.
2. All three synoptics note "the sixth hour" as the beginning of the three hours of supernatural darkness "over all the land" while the Lord hung on the tree (Matt 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44; the third also "about"). John may be referring explicitly to their notice, and drawing our attention to the choice of the Jews that leads to it. "You will recall from my synoptic colleagues," he seems to be saying, "that God darkened the earth at the sixth hour of that awesome day. It was not much earlier than that time that a comparable darkness was evident in the minds of the chief priests, who would not recognize Jesus as their king, but cast their lot with Caesar instead."

and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!--As in the first presentation, so in the second, Pilate presents Jesus as "the king of the Jews." His words drip with sarcasm, and yet, from one posed in the official seat of judgment, they have an air of authority about them. For the second time, Pilate proclaims the Lord's authority.

15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him.--The form of their request is unusual; they may be echoing the Lord's words in 2:16 when he purged the temple.

Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King?--He forces them to confront the decision they are making. The Lord claimed before them to be the Son of God; now Pilate presents him as king. Whatever excuse they may have for their action in rejecting the Messiah, they cannot claim ignorance of his claims.

The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.--This choice is worse than the choice of Barabbas in v. 40. Barabbas is a semitic name; the man, though a criminal, was at least a Jew. But in swearing allegiance to Caesar, they disobey Moses' command in Deut 17:15,

one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which *is* not thy brother.

Second Abuse, 19:16a

16 Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified.--At first glance, “them” would appear to be the Jews, but 31b shows that they would not be able to crucify him. In v. 18, the same “they” clearly refers to the Roman soldiers. Reentry to the Praetorium is not noted here, but neither is it in 19:1, though the sequel (19:4) shows that it took place there, and may have here as well.

“Delivered” is the same word we noted in 18:30, and closes out the interrogation as an inclusio.

- Initially, Judas delivered up the Lord.
- Then the Jewish rulers joined in his perfidy.
- Now Pilate betrays him as well, condemning a man whom he knows full well to be innocent.

Which is worse—to deny the Lord as Peter did, or to confess him as king and then betray him as Pilate does?

The Crucifixion, 19:16b-42

This section is divided into smaller sections by shifts in the major people. The five sections that result form a chiasm based on correspondences of major phrases between them.

Jewish allies honor Jesus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the place where ... crucified ● they took Jesus 	16b-22, Pilate	38-42, Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus
Soldiers fulfill Scripture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● soldiers ● untorn cloke, unbroken bones ● that the Scripture might be fulfilled 	23-24, in distributing his garments	31-37, in piercing his side but not breaking his bones
The Lord finishes his work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proper names recall outer members ● Fulfillment recalls middle pair 	25-30, in caring for his mother and giving up his life	

The recurring theme throughout is how God has frustrated the hatred of the Jews

- In the outer pair of members, those whom we would think to be allies of the Jews honor the Lord.

- In the middle pair, the very soldiers who put him on the tree, fulfill scripture by their actions.
- At the center, Jesus provides final care for his own, and finishes his redemptive work.

First Honor by Jewish Allies, 16b-22

And they took Jesus, and led *him* away.--After being so much in control in his interviews with Pilate, Jesus now becomes passive (but note the return to activity and control at the center of the chiasm). He has yielded himself into the hands of others who can “take” and “lead” him. This corresponds to v. 38, where Joseph takes the body of Jesus. In spite of this, every paragraph emphasizes God's control. Jewish allies honor him, the soldiers fulfill Scripture, and the Lord puts his affairs in order.

17 And he bearing his cross—The synoptics say that Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry the cross. Apparently the Lord began carrying the cross, but could not continue by reason of weakness.

went forth into a place called *the place of a skull*, which is called in the Hebrew *Golgotha*: 18 where they crucified him,--“Golgotha” simply means “skull.” Various explanations of this name have been proposed, none with certainty:

- It was a hill that looked like a skull, but the scriptures nowhere say that it was a hill. The place shown today (Gordon's Calvary, north of the Arab bus station) is implausible on other grounds, and the skull-like appearance is due to modern excavation that has exposed old cisterns that now look like eyes.
- There were skulls lying about from executed prisoners. But the Jews buried even condemned prisoners, as we know not only from the gospel record (v. 31), but also from Josephus (BJ, 4, 5, 2).
- The most ancient explanation is that it was named from the skull of Adam, who was buried there. The full story would be that Noah preserved the bones of Adam, and Shem received the skull, which made its way to Jerusalem.

The story about Adam is fabulous, but it may well have accounted for the name of the place. John does not make this association with Adam explicit, but he is the only evangelist to record that the Lord was buried in a garden (with strong overtones of the Adam history), and this reference is first made in the corresponding paragraph of this chiasm (v. 41). These paragraphs are also linked by the explicit reference to “the place where Jesus was crucified.” If John's readers knew of the tradition about Adam's skull, he may be using these associations to suggest what Paul later makes explicit in calling our Lord “the last Adam” (1 Cor 15:45; cf. Rom 5:12ff; again, John providing the gospel background for Paul).

- Jesus died at the traditional tomb of the first Adam, to bring life to the children of Adam.
- By his burial, he gained access into a garden, showing that he had overcome the exile from the garden of God that was imposed on the first Adam because of his sin.

and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.--The synoptics record that they were insurrectionists, but we would know in any event that they were criminals by the circumstance that they were crucified. This is another agreement with Isa 53, this time v. 9 “he made his grave with the wicked” and 12 “he was numbered with the transgressors.”

19 And Pilate wrote a title, and put *it* on the cross.--It was customary to display the condemned

man's crime. Col 2:14 uses this custom as a metaphor for how the Lord has forgiven our sins.

And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.--For the third time Pilate declares the Lord to be the King of the Jews. His three-fold confession has taken the place of Peter's threefold denial.

We ought not to think of Pilate as a paragon of faith. He is angry with the Jews that they have forced him into an action he knows is wrong, and he mockingly displays as their king a man disfigured with beating and publicly exposed. His intention is probably, "What a miserable people this is, to have such a wretch as their king." But the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water, and he turns it whichever way he will (Prov 21:1). God uses his gesture of revenge on the Jews to proclaim his Son's true honor.

20 This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.--"For" governs two explanations that many Jews read it.

1. Crucifixions were held in public places, to offer the strongest deterrent to the most people. Many would have seen the Lord there.
2. Pilate's recording of the charge in the three most common languages of the day would ensure that everybody could understand it. This was one of the pilgrimage feasts. Just as God providentially multiplied the tongues of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, so here he causes Pilate to multiply the languages in which the Lord's true title is proclaimed.

Peter denied the Lord in a small group; Pilate proclaims his title as broadly as one could wish.

21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.--They do not want Jesus acknowledge as their king by anybody.

22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.--Pilate is unmoved.

First Fulfillment by Soldiers, 23-24

23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also *his* coat:--It was customary for executioners to take the possessions of the victim as their perquisite.

Carson compares the scene with the footwashing in ch. 13. There, the Lord laid aside his outer garments to wash the disciples' feet. Here, he loses all of his clothes, to bathe them entirely. He descends even deeper into humiliation, that he might procure full salvation for us.

now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.--Gill quotes from Jewish authorities to the effect that this was characteristic of all the garments of the priests. Mention of such a garment at the crucifixion emphasizes the priestly work that the Lord is here carrying out.

24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots.--John recalls the words of David in Ps 22:18. They had no intention of fulfilling Scripture. Their only thought was to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor wretch who had fallen under their power. Yet God sovereignly guided so that their actions carried out what he had purposed should be done.

These things therefore the soldiers did.--John emphasizes that it is the soldiers who did this, to show their control by God, and perhaps to set up the crucial linkage with the corresponding element on the other side of the chiasm.

The Lord's Final Actions, 25-30

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother,--Mary, previously mentioned in John only at the marriage of Cana in ch. 2.

and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas,--Most modern commentaries take these as two separate women, which avoids having two sisters named Mary, and provides four women to match the four soldiers in the previous section. However, John never leaves out the conjunction in an enumeration (see notes). So this must be an apposition, and "sister" here probably refers not to a blood sister but to a sister-in-law (either Joseph's sister, or Cleophas was Joseph's brother). Cleophas is another form of Alphaeus (Matt 10:3); she was the mother of James the less (one of the twelve) and Jude the apostle (if the genitive in Luke 6:16 indicates "brother")..

and Mary Magdalene.--As we discussed in chapters 11 and 12, this is probably Mary of Bethany.

It is noteworthy that while the disciples (save John) have all fled, the women remain faithful. This is an illustration of a tendency we have often noted, that women are by nature more inclined to spiritual things than are men. The emphasis throughout the NT on male leadership in the assemblies is not because women do not have the inclination or capacity, but because the males need the encouragement in order not to drop out entirely.

26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman,--Not necessarily a rude address, any more than in 2:4. But as there, it indicates that while he loves and respects her, she is not first in his loyalty. Luke 14:26 requires us to hate our parents, compared with our love for the Lord. Our Savior's duty to his Father requires him to leave his mother, for whom as eldest son he would be responsible.

behold thy son! 27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!--The words have been compared to a legal adoption formula. The Lord's care for his mother is a good example of the relation between our duty to God and our duty to our relations after the flesh. He owes his first allegiance to the Father, but having satisfied the Father's will, he makes provision for her.

And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.--Mary is apparently widowed by this time, and John undertakes to care for her. The biblical pattern is for women to be in a family, under a man's care and protection—either a father, or a husband, or (as here) a son.

She had other children (Matt 13:55: James, Joses, Simon, Judas, and at least two daughters), but at this time they did not believe on the Lord (7:5). Apparently, the Lord had been responsible for her, and so he now makes provision for her continued care.

28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished,--John associates the Lord's request for drink, and the sponge of vinegar, with the Lord's statement that all is finished. It is instructive to compare this with circumstance associated with the timing of the vinegar episode in the synoptics (cf. Matt 27:46ff). There, the vinegar immediately (Matt 27:48 "straightway" *eugews*) followed the Lord's cry from Ps 22, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" At this moment, when the Father has turned his face away from him, the Lord knows that he has accomplished the work he came to do. He has successfully taken the place of guilty sinners, and drawn upon himself the divine

rejection that they deserve. In the midst of the agony of this ineffable separation within the godhead, he realizes that his work is done.

that the scripture might be fulfilled,--The reference is to two passages in the Psalms:

22:15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

69:21 They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

John continues to emphasize that the entire transaction was foretold in the Old Testament, showing the Father's control over it all.

The Lord's action appears to be a deliberate effort to fulfill the Scripture. Here he knows that his work is finished, but he delays stating that (v. 30) until he has fulfilled this one remaining detail.

saith, I thirst.--The NET's note is suggestive. The Lord has just been forsaken by the Father. Earlier (7:39), he identified the Holy Spirit with living water. He could bear the physical thirst associated with his sufferings as long as the Father was with him, but now, abandoned spiritually, he gives voice to his pain.

29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar:--Sour wine, mixed with water, a common beverage (cf. Ruth 2:14, "dip thy morsel in the vinegar"). This was part of the allotment of the soldiers, not to be confused with the drugged wine that the Lord refused earlier (Matt 27:34).

and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.--The nearest antecedent would in fact be the women and John, but if this was the soldiers' vinegar, "they" likely indicates the soldiers. John leaves the actors ambiguous to reserve the explicit mention of the soldiers as a way to link the second and penultimate sections.

30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished:--Now he declares what he had realized in v.28 (same form).

and he bowed his head,--a curious expression in Greek. In all the Greek Bible, Josephus, and Philo, it appears only here and in Matt 8:20 and Luke 9:58, where it refers to taking rest in sleep ("the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head"). Rather than a mere expression of weakness or an attitude of prayer, it is tempting to see the gesture here as an explicit allusion to the Synoptic saying: the Lord, having finished his work, finally takes his rest.

and gave up the ghost.--This is another instance of the verb *paradidwmi*, which occurs 15x in John. In every other place it refers to a betrayal of Jesus: 10x of Judas betraying him to the Jews, 3x of the Jews betraying him to Pilate (18:30, 35; 19:11), and once of Pilate (19:16). John's use of the same word here is surely intended us to recall these other instances. Though others abused him and betrayed him, the Lord remains in control. Ultimately it is he, not others, who gives himself up.

Second Fulfillment by Soldiers, 31-37

31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, ... the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day).--We have here three designations of the time.

1. "The preparation," as we saw in our discussion of v. 14, means "the day before the Sabbath," that is, Friday.

2. "The sabbath" thus describes the following day.
3. "An high day" refers to the second day of unleavened bread, when the firstfruits were offered in the temple. (In the past, I have associated firstfruits with the Sunday of the week of unleavened bread, understanding "sabbath" in Lev 23:11 of the weekly sabbath. This was apparently the Sadducees' tradition, followed by the Samaritans and the Karaites, but see Josephus Antiquities 3.250, and explanation in Edersheim's Temple, for clear evidence that the firstfruits were in fact offered on the second day of unleavened bread, independent of when the Sabbath fell.)

that the bodies should not remain upon the cross.--The law (Deut 21:22,23) required that the body of a condemned criminal not be exposed overnight, lest the land be defiled. If this was the case on any night, how much more important it was to avoid defilement on a Sabbath, and a Sabbath when the firstfruits were offered, at that.

The Jews' concern thus mirrors that in 18:28, fastidiously maintaining ceremonial purity while fomenting the unjust execution of a righteousness man.

Application: May the Lord preserve us against this attitude of defining purity in terms of legalistic conformity to Scripture rather than seeking after the Lord with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. The HS's inner prompting is an important part of what keeps us pure before the Lord.

besought Pilate that their legs might be broken,--Unable to support himself by the legs, the condemned person would die of slow asphyxiation.

and that they might be taken away.--That is, for burial.

32 Then came the soldiers,--The same unlikely aides to fulfillment we saw in vv. 23-24. John singles out two actions on their part.

and brake the legs ... they brake not his legs:--First, though they broke the legs of the other prisoners, they did not break the Lord's legs, because he was already dead.

34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.--Second, one of them poked him with a spear to demonstrate his death.

The significance of the blood and water is extensively debated, both medically (what caused it?) and symbolically (what does it mean?).

The medical analysis isn't really pertinent to understanding the passage. John appears to ascribe some symbolic significance to the event, for he alludes to it in 1 John 5:6,

This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.

Carson alludes to a widespread Jewish and Hellenistic belief that the human body was a bag of water and blood, so spilling these out would indicate that the Lord truly died. Such an emphasis might be necessary in the light of docetic tendencies that denied the physical incarnation, an aspect of the gnostic movement that blossomed in the second century. In this view, the Christ only appeared to be a man. But John insists that "the word was made flesh" (1:14), and here he cites evidence from the crucifixion to substantiate that claim.

The association of blood and water elsewhere in scripture points to a further significance. The two are often associated in references to purification:

Lev 14:52 And he shall cleanse the house with the **blood** of the bird, and with the running

water, and with the living bird, and with the cedar wood, and with the hyssop, and with the scarlet: (cf. vv. 6, 51)

Heb 9:19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the **blood** of calves and of goats, with **water**, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,

So John may be emphasizing as well the purifying effect of the Lord's death.

35 And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.--John insists here as elsewhere (21:24) on the historical reliability of his testimony, as do other apostles:

1 John 1:1-3 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) 3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you,

Acts 10:39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem;

2 Pet 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Heb 2:3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

The historical reliability of the NT documents is fundamental to the Christian faith. There are those today who want to call themselves Christian, while insisting that the NT documents are later fabrications mixing a little fact with much fiction. The two positions are incompatible.

36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled,--As in 23-24, the soldiers, for all their cruelty and ungodliness, cannot help but carry out God's preordained plan. This time, they accomplish two fulfillments.

A bone of him shall not be broken.--Three OT allusions are possible.

Ex 12:46; Num 9:12, all record the requirement that the bones of the passover lamb not be broken. The Baptist introduced our Lord in 1:29, 36 as "the lamb of God," and John is probably pointing out how the Lord's death meets the requirements of the passover ceremony.

Ps 34:20 has also been cited. It emphasizes the Lord's care for the righteous man,

Psalm 34:19-20 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. 20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

The emphasis here will be on the Lord's innocence, also a passover theme, in that the lamb was to be without spot or blemish (Exod 12:5).

Given the prominence of Psa 22 in the passion narrative, a third reference may be to Ps 22:17, "I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me."

37 And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.--A quotation of Zech 12:10, which singles out this aspect of the Lord's death that the Jews will recognize when they

turn to him at the last day. Notably, Zech 12:10 accuses the Jews of piercing him, while John is clear that it is the soldiers who did the deed. By citing the passage, he is holding the Jews accountable for the actions of the Romans, which took place under Jewish instigation.

Second Honor by Jewish Allies, 38-42

38 And after this Joseph of Arimathaea,--Luke in fact tells us (23:50, 51) that he was a “counsellor,” that is, a member of the Sanhedrin, and that he had not acquiesced in the decision to condemn the Lord. **being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews,**--He is thus one of those mentioned in 12:42,

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

But now he takes public action.

besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave *him* leave.--According to Carson, this is an additional snub to the Jews. Under Roman law, seditionists were not given to next of kin but left to rot. To satisfy the Jewish concern for defilement, the body would have been placed in a common grave. Pilate's permission recognizes Joseph's prestige in the community, and also reflects his conviction that Jesus is not really guilty of sedition.

He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.--As at the beginning of the crucifixion narrative, the Lord is passive.

39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night,--Another important member of the community, “the teacher in Israel” (3:10), in a position to debate with the other rulers (7:50-51).

The friendly actions of these two men, formally members of the community that condemned the Lord, correspond structurally to the attestation of him as King of the Jews by Pilate, formally his adversary, in the opening paragraph (16b-22) of the crucifixion narrative.

and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound *weight*.--About 75 pounds in our weight.

40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.--Instead of being dumped in a common grave as his adversaries anticipated, the Lord is lovingly anointed with costly spices.

41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden;--compare vv. 17-18, which also characterizes “the place where he was crucified” in terms of the legend of Adam's skull. Once again we have a reference to the events of Eden. The crucifixion overcomes the sentence of death that fell on Adam and his descendants, and opens once more the door to the edenic garden.

and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.--First-century tombs were rock-hewn caves that sheltered the remains of an entire family. Carson suggests that families would not have permitted a criminal to be buried with their family for fear of defilement. This tomb offered no such objection, because no one was there yet. Tradition holds that it belonged to Joseph, though the canonical gospels do not specify this.

Because the Lord was the only occupant, the resurrection was especially striking—the tomb was now

empty.

42 There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation *day*; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.--There was not time to carry him farther.

Notes

Time References in John

These examples seem to confirm that John reckons time starting at dawn, not at midnight.

1:39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.--The time appears to be mentioned to explain why they stayed with him (though “for” is interpretive, not in Greek); this would presume a time in the afternoon, not 10 AM.

4:6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with *his* journey, sat thus on the well: *and* it was about the sixth hour.--The appearance is that Jesus is in the midst of a journey—likely at noon, but not at 6 AM.

4:52-53 Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. 53 So the father knew that *it was* at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.--Undecisive.

11:9 Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day?--Suggests a counting method oriented dawn-dusk.

Kai in enumerations

19:25 N kai N N kai N—three or four?

Note Rev 11:18 for apposition after a member of a series

Rev 17:15 for series interrupted by copula

R22:13 for three apposed pairs

N kai N kai N...how many nouns?

3: Ex 6:3; J2:14; 11:5; 14:6; 18:3, 12; 1J 2:16; 1J 5:8; R2:2; R4:5, 9, 11; R5:11; R7:11; R 8:12; R9:17 (bis), 18; R11:1, 18; R12:14; R15:2; R17:4, 14; R18:2, 8, 16 (bis); R19:1, 19

4: 2:12; R 5:9, 13; R7:9; R8:5; R9:15; R10:11; R11:9; R12:10; R13:7; R14:6, 7; R15:2 (stephanus); R16:18; R18:2 (BGT), 17 (though may be some grouping), 22

5: 21:2; Rev 3:17 ; R9:20; R11:19; R19:18 (with more complex inner structuring)

6: Rev 2:19; R13:16; R22:15

7:Rev 1:11; R5:12; R6:15; R7:12

8: R21:8

29(!) Rev 18:12,13

pN kai pN ... (prepositional phrases)

3: 16:8; R16:13; cf. R19:6

4: Rev 5:13; R6:8

Ex 6:3 N kai N kai N

Exception

1J 5:7 (stephanus): N N kai N—strikingly non-Johannine