



Benziger Brothers, Inc. Bible Stories for Little Children (New York, NY: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1894) 84



a study of

The Gospel According to John

Summer/Fall/Winter 2025-2026

Lesson #21

John 18

"The Light Shines in the Darkness, and the dark did not overtake it."

Jesus-Centered Questions

- How does this passage reveal aspects of Jesus' character or mission?
- In what ways does this passage align with or challenge Jesus' teachings, actions, or mission?
- How does this passage inspire me to embody Jesus' love more fully?
- What next steps can I take to better align my life with Jesus' way?

REVIEW: Look over the words Jesus spoke to his disciples during their Passover meal (John 14-17). Discuss attributes of his nature and his message that are meaningful to you.

BRIEF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT:

The arrest and crucifixion narrative begins with the picture of a garden where Jesus will be betrayed and it concludes in a garden, where Jesus will be buried. Jesus' arrest is the seventh time he is accosted by religious leaders in order to arrest or stone him. The prior six times he disappears and walks away unseen and unharmed. The seventh time he succumbs to the way of the cross, to the way of glory.

Of note: the synoptic Gospels describe the police as a crowd of chief priests, scribes, and elders, carrying clubs and swords. John's Gospel includes a "detachment." (18:3) A Roman military detachment in Jerusalem typically consisted of 500 - 1,000 men, stationed at the Antonia Fortress and the Herodian Palace, tasked with maintaining order, especially during Jewish festivals.

Jesus is subjected to violence in the next few scenes of John's Gospel. Any reference to a "trial" should be seen as more of a "mock trial" in that no one is looking for justice, but for a swift and permanent solution to silence Jesus.

There are two "trials" immediately following Jesus' arrest (18:12-27). These take place in the dead of night, as Passover meals last several hours. We can assume Jesus was interrogated by the Temple leadership until the wee hours, then brought to Caiaphas' home and kept until he could be brought before Pilate at daybreak.

The narrator switches back and forth between two scenes: one outside, in the courtyard where the crowd interrogates Peter and the other on the inside, with Annas interrogating Jesus. Annas is the former high priest, and father-in-law of Caiaphas, the current high priest. Interestingly, the Synoptic Gospels all give different accounts of who is present. Some say, Caiaphas was there, some say the entire Sanhedrin council, John mentions only Annas.

John's next scene is Jesus' trial before Pilate (18:28 through 19:16). We will save that for week's lesson.

Read John 18:1-11

1. What do you recall of Jesus' in Gethsemane from the other three Gospels, which John omits?
2. Verses 5 & 8 reveal what phrase so popular with John's Gospel?
3. What do you make of v.6? How would you direct that, as Steven Spielberg?
4. Read John 1:5. What comparison might John be making here with light and darkness?

Read Mark 14:35, 36, 40, 50

1. How does John's narrative differ from Mark's gospel concerning:
 - a. Jesus' emotional state (v.35)
 - b. Jesus' surety of his mission (v.36)
 - c. the disciples actions (v.40, v.50)
2. What does John want us to see in Jesus?
3. Extra credit: all four Gospels include an incident where a high priest's slave has his ear cut off by a disciple. What two details does John provide in his narrative? (Why?) Is it possible that Malchus became a follower of Christ? Or, by giving the man's name may suggest that John has an eye witness? The very specificity of his name encourages historical inquiry and suggests that the Gospel authors expected readers to recognize the individual or verify the account.

Read John 18:12-27

1. Of the four Gospels, John is the only one who choreographs this story as two trials taking place at the same time. Discuss the scenes, dialogue, and who has control of the narrative.
2. John contrasts Jesus' actions with Peter's actions throughout the drama. Compare the two men and their behavior, beginning with Peter's. pledge to die for Jesus, during dinner, in Gethsemane, at the arrest, and in the high priest's courtyard
3. Choose one word to describe how Jesus carries himself throughout this chapter.