

JOHN

Chapter 18

Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

18 When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. **2** Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. **3** So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. **4** Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, **“Whom do you seek?”** **5** They answered him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, **“I am he.”** Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. **6** When Jesus said to them, **“I am he,”** they drew back and fell to the ground. **7** So he asked them again, **“Whom do you seek?”** And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” **8** Jesus answered, **“I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go.”** **9** This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: “Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one.” **10** Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant[*c*] and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) **11** So Jesus said to Peter, **“Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”**

18:1 *crossed the Kidron Valley.* East of Jerusalem and dry except during the rainy season. (CSB)

Kidron means “murky” or “turgid.” The brook is a wadi or watercourse, dry except in the rainy season; it adjoins Jerusalem on the east and empties into the Dead Sea. The valley is mentioned only here and in 2 Chron. 30:14.

a garden - Though unnamed here, Gethsemane. Perhaps John does name it because the place was unfamiliar to his readers. (TLSB)

18:2 *Judas.* Jesus was not trying to keep His movements secret, thus He returned to a place He frequented. (TLSB)

often met there - Only John supplies this detail. Jesus and His disciples may have camped in this place for the Passover festival and at other times when they visited Jerusalem. Augustine: “There accordingly, the wolf, clad in sheep’s skin, and tolerated among the sheep by the profound counsel of the Father of the family, leaned where he might opportunely scatter the slender flock, and lay his coveted snares for the Shepherd” (NPNF1 7:416). (TLSB)

18:3 *band* – Cohort of Roman soldiers, or a 10th legion. Not likely a whole cohort (normally 500-600, though the numbers varied), though concern that rioting among the Galileans at the feast would be sparked by the arrest of Jesus might have motivated the authorities to send a large detachment. (TLSB)

officers from the chief priests and Pharisees. Equivalent to the temple guard sent by the Sanhedrin. (CSB)

Reinforcement of these police by Roman soldiers was necessary because the temple police failed to arrest Jesus previously and because of the concern about the resistance from the Galileans (cf. 7:44-46). (TLSB)

torches. Resinous pieces of wood fastened together. (CSB)

lanterns. Terra-cotta holders into which household lamps could be inserted. (CSB)

Perhaps thought necessary to prevent Jesus from hiding in the garden, despite a full moon that night (Passover was calculated by the phases of the moon. (TLSB)

weapons - Ironically used to arrest the One who came to bring peace (14:27; 16:33; 20:19). Augustine: “God lay hid in that human flesh; and eternal day was so obscured in those human limbs, that with lanterns and torches He was sought for to be slain by the darkness” (NPNF1 7:417). (TLSB)

18:4 *knowing all that would happen to him.* Jesus was not taken by surprise. (CSB)

More evidence that Jesus willingly submitted to His Father’s will (10:18). (TLSB)

18:5 *I am.* Note the threefold repetition of the “I am” in vv. 5, 6, 8. An expression of self-identification. (TLSB)

with them. John does not let us forget where Judas belonged. (CSB)

Judas is mentioned often in John (eight times), usually with specific reference to his betrayal. This is the last reference in John. (TLSB)

18:6 *fell to the ground.* They came to arrest a meek peasant and instead were met in the dim light by a majestic person. (CSB)

The Son of God confronted the power of darkness that came out against Him and caused its agents to recoil before His very presence (cf. 12:31; 14:30). Cf. 2 Kings 1 for the humbling of Ahaziah’s troops. (TLSB)

18:8 *I am.* The threefold repetition (vv. 5, 6, 8) emphasizes the solemn words. (CSB)

let these men go. Jesus cared for the disciples even as he was going to his death. Twice he had made the arresting party say plainly that he was the one they wanted (vv. 4–5, 7). (CSB)

18:9 *was to fulfill.* Words normally used in quoting Scripture, and Jesus’ words are on the same level. See 6:39; 17:12. (CSB)

18:10 *Simon Peter.* It is to John that we owe the information that the man with the sword (the Greek for this word refers to a short sword) was Peter, and that the man he wounded was named Malchus. (CSB)

Relatively short sword (like a dagger) that could be concealed under a coat. Some Jewish sources indicate that it was illegal to carry such a weapon during Passover. The servant perhaps sought to avoid Peter’s wild blow, but when he flinched, his ear was severed. (TLSB)

Malchus - Similar to Hebrew “king”; mentioned by name only in John. Perhaps a Syrian or Nabataean servant attached to the high priest’s household. (TLSB)

18:11 *the cup.* Often points to suffering (Ps 75:8; Eze 23:31–34) and the wrath of God (Isa 51:17, 22; Jer 25:15; Rev 14:10; 16:19). (CSB)

the Father has given me. The Synoptic Gospels also speak of the cup at the time of Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane (Mt 26:39; Mk 14:36; Lk 22:42), and John says it came from the Father. God was in control. (CSB)

Cup of wrath and suffering, which God - not His enemies - had prepared for Him (cf. Ps,75:8; Is 51:17; Jer. 25:15; Eze. 23:31-34; Hab 2:16). (CSB)

18:1–11 Jesus takes charge and powerfully confronts those who come to arrest Him in the garden, even while He voluntarily accepts the suffering that lies before Him. Jesus suffered and died not as a martyr for a noble cause but as the Savior whose sacrifice atoned for our sin. • I give You thanks, O Redeemer, that I am counted among Your own. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus Faces Annas and Caiaphas

12 So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. 13 First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. 14 It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.

18:12 *bound him.* The reason for the bonds is not clear. Perhaps their use was standard procedure, much like the modern use of handcuffs. (CSB)

Standard procedure for Roman soldiers, who took no chances lest an escape lead to serious trouble. (TLSB)

18:13 *Annas.* Had been deposed from the high priesthood by the Romans in A.D. 15 but was probably still regarded by many as the true high priest. In Jewish law a man could not be sentenced on the day his trial was held. The two examinations—this one (mentioned only by John) and that before Caiaphas—may have been conducted to give some form of legitimacy to what was done. (CSB)

He was the high priest AD 6-15, when he was deposed by the Roman governor. At this time, Annas was not in office but continued to bear the honorary title. His five sons and his son-in-law Caiaphas succeeded him. (TLSB)

18:14 *Caiaphas ... had advised the Jews.* A reference to 11:49–50. For John it was this unconscious prophecy that mattered most about Caiaphas. John may also have been hinting that a fair trial could not be expected from a man who had already said that putting Jesus to death was expedient.

18:12–14 Jewish officials arrest Jesus with the assistance of Roman soldiers and lead Him to the high priest Annas for questioning. The arrest of God's Son reveals the depths to which sinful humans will go to remove Him from their lives. God used those who led Jesus to His cross as His instruments to accomplish our salvation. • O Lord Jesus, I praise You that You died not only for my sins, but for the sins of all people. Amen. (TLSB)

Peter Denies Jesus

15 Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, 16 but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in. 17 The servant girl at the door said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." 18 Now the

servants[g] and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.

18:15 *another disciple.* Perhaps John himself. (CSB)

known to the high priest. Refers to more than casual acquaintance; he had entrée into the high priest's house and could bring Peter in. (CSB)

For reasons unspecified, John had access to the high priest's house and was familiar with some servants there. (TLSB)

court - Atrium or open area, probably in the Hasmonean Palace, which stood opposite the west wall of the temple, across the Tyropeon Valley. Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas would have occupied separate apartments surrounding the court mentioned here. (TLSB)

18:17 *the servant girl at the door.* All four Gospels tell us that Peter's first challenge came from a slave girl, the most unimportant person imaginable. Her question expected the answer "No." Peter took the easy way out. The other Gospels seem to indicate that the other denials followed immediately, but it is likely that there were intervals during which other things happened (see Lk 22:58–59). (CSB)

Peter took the way out that her question provided. (TLSB)

18:18 *it was cold* - Night temperatures in Jerusalem (elevation 2400 feet) could be cold in the spring, but only occasionally freezing. (TLSB)

Peter also was standing with them. On a cold night he would have been conspicuous if he had stayed away from the fire. (CSB)

18:15–18 Despite Peter's "brave" promise to lay down his life for Jesus (13:37), Peter denies that he is Jesus' disciple because of his concern for self-protection. Tragically, our mouths with which we confess Jesus as Savior can also quickly deny Him. Our loving Lord did not begrudge His atoning sacrifice even to those who had denied and abandoned Him. The living Word saves us. • "What wondrous love is this That caused the Lord of bliss To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!" Amen. (LSB 543:1) (TLSB)

The High Priest Questions Jesus

19 The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. 20 Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. 21 Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said." 22 When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" 23 Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?" 24 Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

18:19 *high priest.* Annas. (TLSB)

questioned. Not legal, since witnesses were supposed to be brought in first to establish guilt. The accused was not required to prove his innocence. Perhaps Annas regarded this as a preliminary inquiry, not a trial. (CSB)

18:20 *I have spoken openly.* It should not have been difficult to find witnesses (v. 21). (CSB)

nothing in secret. Not a denial that he taught the disciples privately, but a denial that he had secretly taught them subversive teaching different from his public message. (CSB)

Jesus' private and public teachings were perfectly consistent. He hid nothing from the authorities. (TLSB)

18:21 *those who have heard Me.* Jesus called the bluff of the high priest by demanding to hear the evidence against Him from the lips of witnesses. (TLSB)

18:22 *struck.* Another illegality. The word apparently means a blow with the open hand—a slap. (CSB)

An illegal act during proper court proceedings. (TLSB)

18:23 *bear witness.* A legal term, indicating an invitation to act in proper legal form. John stresses the importance of testimony throughout his Gospel. (CSB)

Furnish proof. Jesus asserted that the proceedings show disrespect for proper authority and for real evidence. To insult proper authority is to insult God (Ex. 22:28). Ironically, the officer's mistreatment of Jesus was blasphemous toward God. (TLSB)

18:24 *sent him bound* - Now the trial would start in earnest. Jesus demanded to hear the evidence against Him, and Caiaphas would attempt to oblige. (TLSB)

18:19–24 After Jesus' arrest, Annas conducts the preliminary interrogation of Jesus. As in the case of Jesus' accusers, sinful human beings are prone to dealing unfairly with others. Jesus calls us to honest dealings. He became the innocent victim of oppression and judgment in order that He would endure the just punishment of our sin (Is 53:7–9) and become our Savior. • O Lamb of God, who went to the cross with no complaint, remind me always of Your unfailing mercy. Amen. (TLSB)

Peter Denies Jesus Again

25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You also are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." 26 One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" 27 Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.

18:25 *said to him.* Lit. "they asked him." Some find a difficulty in that Mt 26:71 says another girl asked this question, whereas Mk 14:69 says it was the same girl, and Lk 22:58 that it was a man. But with a group of servants talking around a fire, several would doubtless take up and repeat such a question, which could be the meaning of John's "they." As on the first occasion (v. 17) the question anticipated the answer "No." The servants probably did not really expect to find a follower of Jesus in the high priest's courtyard, but the question seemed worth asking. (CSB)

18:26 *a relative.* Another piece of information we owe to John. A relative would have a deeper interest in the swordsman than other people had. But the light in the garden would have been dim, as in the courtyard (a charcoal fire glows, but does not have flames). (CSB)

Didn't I see you ... ? Expected the answer "Yes." (CSB)

Now Peter faced a real crisis. A relative of Malchus, who certainly remembered Peter, uncovered his identity. (TLSB)

18:27 *a rooster crowed.* The fulfillment of the prophecy in 13:38. (CSB)

John does not mention Peter's flight and sorrowful tears (Mt. 26:75; Mk. 14:72; Lk. 22:62). Chickens are never mentioned in the OT but were apparently common in NT times. (TLSB)

18:25–27 In sharp contrast to Jesus' forthright self-disclosure ("I am," vv 5, 8), Peter denies Jesus a third time ("I am not"), leaving Jesus alone on the way to suffering and death. Jesus warned that whoever denies Him before others, He will deny before His Father in heaven (Mt 10:33). But Christ's love is greater than our sin, and with His forgiveness He will restore a broken heart. • Lord Jesus, be patient with me and forgive me, that I might live by Your promise. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus Before Pilate

28 Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters.[f] It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. 29 So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" 30 They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." 31 Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." 32 This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

18:28 *governor's headquarters.* John says little about the Jewish phase of Jesus' trial but much about the Roman trial. It is possible that John was in the Praetorium, the governor's official residence, for this trial. (CSB)

early morning. The chief priests evidently held a second session of the Sanhedrin after daybreak to give some appearance of legality to what they did (Mk 15:1). This occasion would have been immediately after that, perhaps between 6:00 A.M. and 7:00 A.M. (CSB)

ceremonial uncleanness. A result of entering a Gentile residence. (CSB)

Jews did not want to become ceremonially unclean by entering the home of Pilate, a Gentile. Yet they wanted to condemn an innocent man. Such care for the Law contrasted unfavorably with the glaring illegalities of Jesus' trial. (TLSB)

no be defiled. Does not mean that the time of the Passover meal had not yet come, for this would contradict the Synoptic Gospels, which have Jesus eating the Passover meal the night before. The term "Passover" was used to refer to the whole festival of Passover and Unleavened Bread, which lasted seven days and included a number of meals. (CSB)

This ambiguous reference to the Passover has raised issues of whether the other Gospels agree with Jn about the timing of events. The other Gospels clearly have Jesus and the Twelve eating Passover on Thursday night. If the reference to Passover here means the Passover meal proper (Ex 12), Jesus and the Twelve would have eaten the Passover a day earlier than the priests. The ambiguity is caused by three factors: (1) "Passover" here may refer to Passover proper (Nisan 13) or to the broader Passover and Unleavened Bread Festival (Nisan 14 to 21); (2) "day of Preparation" (Jn 19:14, 31, 42) may refer to preparation of Passover proper or to the Friday preparation for the Sabbath during the broader festival; and (3) different groups of Jews observed different calendars at this time, so Jesus may have kept a different feast day from that kept at the temple by the priests. (TLSB)

18:29 *Pilate.* The Roman governor (see note on Mk 15:1). He showed himself tolerant of Jewish ways. (CSB)

Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea (AD 26-36) appointed by Emperor Tiberius on the recommendation of Sejanus, commander of the Roman Praetorian guard. Pilate's political situation was greatly complicated after AD, 31 when Tiberius executed Sejanus for insurrection. An inscription mentioning Pilate's service was found at the Roman theater in Caesarea Maritima, where Pilate had his home. (TLSB)

What accusation – A normal question at the beginning of a trial, but it was difficult to answer, because the Jews had no charge that would stand up in a Roman court of law. (CSB)

18:30 Jesus' accusers implicitly admitted the weakness of their case by not providing a specific charge against Him. (TLSB)

18:31–33, 37–38 These verses appear on the back and front of an ancient Egyptian papyrus page out of a book (P⁵² of the J. Rylands Library, Manchester, England). The page is dated c AD 125. Apparently, within 30–40 years of when John likely wrote his Gospel at Ephesus, a copy of his work made it to Egypt. (TLSB)

18:31 *Take him yourselves.* In other words, no Roman charge, no Roman trial. (CSB)

Pilate gruffly suggests that the Council deal with Jesus itself. He already that he knows Jesus is being mistreated. The Romans gave local governments freedom to rule their own people by local law, but capital cases were to be judged by the Roman authorities alone. (TLSB)

not lawful for us. They were looking for an execution, not a fair trial. The restriction was important, for otherwise Rome's supporters could be quietly removed by local legal executions. Sometimes the Romans seem to have condoned local executions (e.g., of Stephen, Ac 7), but normally they retained the right to inflict the death penalty. (CSB)

18:32 *the kind of death he was going to die.* Cf. 12:32–33 and “must” in 12:34. Jewish execution was by stoning, but Jesus' death was to be by crucifixion, whereby he would bear the curse (Dt 21:22–23). The Romans, not the Jews, had to put Jesus to death. God was overruling in the whole process. (CSB)

The Romans executed noncitizens by crucifixion (cf 3:14), in contrast to stoning under Jewish law (e.g., Ac 7:57–58). (TLSB)

18:28–32 To avoid religious contamination, the Jewish leaders refuse to enter Pilate's residence, but they unjustly seek to use Pilate's authority to put Jesus to death. Even religious people are capable of manipulating others to advance personal agendas. Remarkably, Jesus' death at the hands of unjust accusers became the very means through which our gracious God took away the guilt of sin. • “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps 51:10). Amen. (TLSB)

My Kingdom Is Not of This World

33 So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” **34** Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” **35** Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” **36** Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” **37** Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the

truth listens to my voice.” 38 Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him. 39 But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” 40 They cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.

18:33-37 In John 18, Jesus is betrayed by Judas (vv 2, 5). Jesus accepts the Father’s will, rebuking Peter’s protection by the sword (v 11). Later, Peter denies his Lord. Annas and Caiaphas falsely accuse Jesus, handing him to Pilate and demanding crucifixion (vv 19–32). Pilate questions Jesus (vv 33–38), finding no earthly crime. Pilate recognizes that Jesus is rejected for claiming to be the Messiah (cf. Jn 1:49; 12:15; 19:7). The Sanhedrin considers his kingship blasphemous (TDNT 1:577). Despite political innocence, Pilate commands crucifixion. He fears accusations of disloyalty to the earthly king (see 19:12, 14–15, 19–22). Thus Jesus is betrayed by his disciples, religious leaders, the nation itself, and civil government. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

All four Gospels record Pilate's question to Jesus: "You, are you the King of the Jews?" But the Synoptics have the answer: "As you say," is the equivalent to the answer at John 18:37. Therefore it is clear that verses 34-37 in John supplement the Synoptics. This altercation is found only in John. Furthermore, Luke 23:2 makes plain why Pilate asked this question. Pilate had refused to sentence Jesus without a definite charge against Him. The threefold charge (Luke 23:2) is, in reality, only one: Jesus is a dangerous law-breaker. A total falsehood. They wanted an earthly King, a temporal Messiah. When they were disappointed they accused Him of being a rebellious, earthly king. Note that they say: "a king" not "the king." Pilate picks this up and asks: "You, are you the King of the Jews?" After this interview Pilate taunts the Jews with this title of Jesus. See Mark 15:9,12 and John 18:39. And he uses this title as the superscription on the cross. The Jews resented this. By the way, Pilate knew why the Jews hated Jesus. See Matthew 27:18 and Mark 15:10. They could not abide His favor with repentant publicans and sinners. (Buls)

18:33-35 After the Jews demanded the death penalty, Pilate summons Jesus to answer the criminal charge: “Are you [*su ei*, emphatic] the king of the Jews?” (emphasis added). In a legal pretense filled with irony, the heavenly King does not look kingly and his subjects deny his Kingship. Jesus asks Pilate if this charge is his or hearsay. Pilate distances himself, saying that because the nation, *your ethnos (to ethnos to son)*, and the chief priests delivered you, there must be a reason. (The word *delivered, paredōkan*, often refers to betrayal. Judas delivered Jesus to the Sanhedrin [Mk 14:10], the Sanhedrin delivered Jesus to Pilate [Mk 15:1], Pilate delivered Jesus to the will of the people [Lk 23:25], and soldiers delivered Jesus to execution [Mk 15:15]. The Gospels present a comprehensive abandonment of Christ by all.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

18:33 *headquarters* – Beck: "Palace." NEB: "His headquarters." This verse and 38 indicate that Pilate spoke to Jesus privately. Pilate asks this question because the Jews had made the accusation: "He says that He Himself is Christ, a king." (Buls)

Are you the king of the Jews? Pilate’s first words to Jesus, identical in all four Gospels. One glance was enough to show him that a dangerous rebel existed only in the imaginations of Jesus’ enemies. (CSB)

Pilate’s question revealed that he was aware of the Jewish leader’s real complaint - Jesus’ messianic claims. Politically speaking, Pilate saw no threat posed to Rome by the pitiable, but not criminal, man before him. (TLSB)

18:34 *do say yjis of your own accord* – If so, Pilate’s question (v. 33) had meant, “Are you a rebel?” If the question had originated with the Jews, it meant, “Are you the Messianic King?” (CSB)

NASB: "Are you saying this on your own initiative or did others tell you" Beck: "Did you think of that yourself, or did others tell you about Me?" If Jesus had said "yes" He would have agreed with the false notions of the Jews. Had He denied, He would have denied His very purpose for coming into the world. He is asking Pilate to meditate on his own motive in asking the question. (Buls)

18:35 Pilate displays irritation for being drawn into what he perceived as a Jewish squabble motivated by jealousy of Jesus' public ministry. (TLSB)

Note in this section that neither Jesus nor Pilate give a direct answer to a question until verse 37 where Jesus directly answer Pilate's question. The translations are interesting: NEB: "What! am I a Jew?" NASB: "I am not a Jew, am I?" Pilate is disturbed by Jesus' question. He does not answer directly but his answer implies that he did not think of the question in verse 33 on his own but rather it was based on what the Jews said. And then his question in verse 35 clearly indicates that he does not want to be associated with the Jews. Jesus evades the question in verse 33 so that he can get at Pilate's motive in order to preach the Gospel to him. Pilate evades the question in verse 34 because he is not interested in Jesus as a person and to dissociate himself from the Jews on their charge against Jesus. Luke 23:2. He puts the blame on "your people and the chief priests." Incidentally, the plural form indicates Annas and Caiaphas. (Buls)

The question shows that Pilate does not believe the charges made in Luke 23:2, for Pilate knows they had delivered Him because of envy, Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10, and so he is desperately trying to find a charge from Jesus Himself. (Buls)

18:36 *My kingdom.* Jesus agrees that he has a kingdom, but asserts that it is not the kind of kingdom that has soldiers to fight for it. It was not built, nor is it maintained, by military might. (CSB)

Jesus does not answer Pilate's question directly but is now beginning to answer the question put to Him by Pilate in verse 33. His answer is composed of two sentences. The first is a simple statement informing Pilate what His Kingdom is NOT. RSV, Lenski and Hendriksen translate "Kingship" rather than "Kingdom." That is correct. By saying "my Kingship" He is admitting that He is a King. He is not speaking of people (Kingdom) but the character of His own Kingship. "Of this world" lays stress on HIS Kingship. "From" denotes both source and kind. It is not derived from this world and it is not of an earthly kind. It is absolutely unique. (Buls)

The second sentence is a contrary to fact condition. It is an *example* which proves that His Kingship is not derived from the world nor is it worldly in character. He could, of course, have used many other examples but Pilate, as a governor, would understand this one immediately. Note the fact that "the servants" are His. He is not denying that He *has* servants. He is denying that they defend Him as earthly servants defend their king. Jesus' weapons and Kingship differ greatly from those of earthly kings. "If it were" is final, it denotes negative purpose. "The Jews" indicates who the real enemies are. By the way, this contrary to fact condition plainly implies Jesus' innocence. The last sentence in verse 36 restates and emphasizes the first sentence in verse 36. NASB: "As it is," meaning: "The true situation is that." (Buls)

Jesus does not defend himself against accusation, but emphatically declares he has a kingdom (*hē basileia hē emē*) whose origin is not of this world. Jesus is not a political threat, proven because his servants would have fought (*ēgōnizonto*, imperfect middle indicative) to prevent Jesus from being delivered (and none did, except Peter, 18:10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Jesus was rejecting any worldly political aspirations or rebellious intent. Although a King, His kingdom did not threaten the external rule of the Roman Empire (cf. Lk. 20:25). (TLSB)

my servants would have been fighting - If Jesus had been establishing a political kingdom, He would have encouraged His disciples to fight to establish it (cf. vv. 10-11). "Legitimate public ordinances are good creations of God and divine ordinances, which a Christian can safely use. This entire topic about the distinction between the spiritual kingdom of Christ and a political kingdom has been explained in the literature of our writers... Christ's kingdom allows us outwardly to use legitimate political ordinances of every nation in which we live, just as it allows us to use medicine or the art of building, or food, drink, and air. Neither does the Gospel offer new laws about the public state, but commands that we obey present laws, whether they have been framed by heathens or by others. It commands that in this obedience we should exercise love" (Ap XVI 53-55). (TLSB)

18:37 *to bear witness to the truth.* Two of this Gospel's important ideas. (CSB)

This is a challenge to Pilate to assess the truth of the claim that Jesus presented. The person of Jesus and His revelation of divine truth are inseparable (14:6). (TLSB)

Jesus has just admitted His Kingship. That is indicated in Pilate's question. We attempt a translation: "So, then, after all, you are a KING?" Note the emphatic "You" in Jesus' answer. NASB: "You say correctly that I am a king." NEB is not recommended: "'King' is your word." In verse 36 He admitted that He had a Kingship and then proceeded to say what His Kingship was NOT. In 37^b He tells Pilate what His Kingship IS. (Buls)

Note "for this" is used twice. This does not denote two purposes but rather two aspects of the same purpose. The first, indicated by a passive perfect, denotes His incarnation which will never end. He points to His human nature. The second, indicated by a perfect active, tells us that He, true God, came willingly into the world. Both terms are key in the Gospel of John. He came from heaven and became a man to testify to the Truth, the Gospel. See 1:17. The Gospel is His means, not force of arms. (Buls)

"Everyone" is an open invitation to all, Jews, Gentiles and Pilate on this occasion. Jesus is inviting Pilate to listen to Him. The phrase is not adjectival: "Everyone who is truthful" but rather denotes source: "Everyone who is born of the Truth" or "Everyone who is converted by the Truth." The writer does not recommend NEB, NIV [above], or even Beck: "Who live in the truth." These translations make the phrase adjectival, not adverbial. KJV and NASB are better: "Everyone who is of the Truth," but one must still interpret this translation. Look at John 1:12-13. Jesus is yearning for Pilate's conversion but Pilate resists. To be begotten of the Truth goes hand in hand with listening to Jesus' voice. In 38^a Pilate clearly indicates that he was not begotten of the Truth and therefore did not listen to Jesus' voice. To Pilate truth was a relative thing. When a man says: "What is Truth?" he shows that to him nothing is truth. Everything is relative which is not truth at all. And the accusations of the Jews (Luke 23:2) are nothing but lies. Compare John 8:44-47, an interesting commentary on the Jews who condemned Jesus. (Buls)

Augsburg Confession, Art. XXVIII, Tappert p. 83: Therefore, the two authorities, the spiritual and the temporal, are not to be mingled or confused, for the spiritual power has its commission to preach the Gospel and administer the sacrament. Hence it should not invade the function of the other, should not set up and dispose kings, should not annul temporal laws or undermine obedience to government, should not make or prescribe to the temporal power laws concerning worldly matters. Christ Himself said 'My kingship is not of this world' and again, 'Who made me a judge or divider over you?' (Luke 12:14). Paul also wrote in Philippians 3:20 'Our commonwealth is in heaven,' and in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 'The

weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God.'

Apology, Art. XXIV. Par 50-51 (German only): Nothing keeps people with the church as does good preaching.

Bengel: Apply yourself entirely to the text; apply your entire study to yourself. (Buls)

Pilate infers from Jesus' testimony he is a King (*oukoun*, "Interrogative, when the question has inferential force," W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, W. Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, 1979], 592; used by permission). Jesus replies that Pilate claims he is a King, thereby maintaining Pilate's responsibility to decide the case. Pilate later admits that Jesus committed no crime, yet he commands execution (v 38; 19:16). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Jesus declares that he left his kingdom to witness to the truth. For this purpose he was born (*egō eis touto gegennēmai*, perfect passive indicative) and comes (*kai eis touto elēlutha*, present active indicative). In this expression, Jesus affirms his preexistence, an intentional incarnation, and that he is the manifestation of truth (see Ps 31:5; Jn 1:14, 17; 14:6; 17:3, 17). All who are of the truth (*pas ho ōn ek tēs alētheias*) hear and continue to hear his voice. Those who receive this witness belong to the truth as Jesus' loyal subjects. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

18:38 *What is truth?* Pilate may have been jesting, and meant, "What does truth matter?" Or he may have been serious, and meant, "It is not easy to find truth. What is it?" Either way, it was clear to him that Jesus was no rebel. (CSB)

This is a cynical dismissive response intended to end the discussion. (TLSB)

I find no guilt in him. Teaching the truth was not a criminal offense. (CSB)

18:39 *you have a custom.* Prisoners are known to have been released on special occasions in other places. (CSB)

Only the Gospels record this custom, which seems to be a local arrangement. (TLSB)

the king of the Jews. John keeps his emphasis on the note of royalty. Pilate may have hoped that the use of the title would influence the people toward the way he wanted them to decide. (CSB)

This title is mocking the absurdity of accusations against Jesus. (TLSB)

18:40 *Barabbas.* A rebel and a murderer (Lk 23:19). The name is Aramaic and means "son of Abba," i.e., "son of the father"; in place of this man, the "Son of the Father" died. (CSB)

18:33–40 Pilate tries to dismiss the case before him by accommodating a Jewish custom calling for the release of a prisoner at Passover—in this instance, an insurrectionist called Barabbas. The story of Jesus' Passion is filled with people refusing to accept responsibility for their own sins, a failure that afflicts us all. But God willed that the guilt of sin be laid on His innocent Son so we might receive God's forgiveness. • Teach me to confess my faults, O Lord. Rule my heart with Your most gracious favor. Amen. (TLSB)