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John 18



Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

In "John 18," Steve Gregg delves into the Gospel of John's coverage of the events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion. Gregg notes that despite some overlap with the synoptic Gospels, John's Gospel includes additional details and observations that are not found elsewhere. One notable difference is John's inclusion of the name of the man whose ear Peter cut off during Jesus' arrest. Gregg also emphasizes the significance of Jesus' interactions with Pilate and the nature of his kingdom, which was not a political or earthly one. Ultimately, Gregg highlights the unique perspective and insights that John's Gospel provides on the final days of Jesus' life.

Transcript

John chapter 18. Of course, in John 17, we have that prayer that Jesus prayed for his disciples. And John, of course, he deliberately skips over important things that the other Gospels have covered adequately and includes things that they have not covered at all.

For example, the other Gospels do not carry the upper room discourse. They do speak of Jesus being in the upper room the night before he was betrayed, but they only have him there conducting the Last Supper. John doesn't even include the Last Supper, but does have four or five chapters of things that transpire in the upper room.

John contains this long prayer of Jesus, but does not mention the three prayers of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane where he prayed that the cup might be removed from him. The synoptics include those prayers in the Garden, but not this one. And so it is that all the way through the Gospel of John, we see John deliberately avoiding overlap between what he shares and what the synoptics have shared, which can be no accident.

I mean, the things he leaves out are so significant that he cannot be unaware of them, and he cannot think they're unimportant, but no doubt his reasoning was they have been covered adequately in the other Gospels, and he is filling in gaps that they omitted. And that would be challenging to maintain this policy in the section we've come to, which is the arrest and the trials of Jesus leading up to his crucifixion. All four Gospels give us a lot of information on this subject.

More chapters than any other comparable short period of time occupy in the Gospels are given to the arrest and the trials of Jesus. He was arrested sometime in the late evening of a certain day of the week, which traditionally has been held to be Thursday night, and then he was crucified about nine in the morning the next day, which has traditionally been thought to be Friday. I say traditionally because there are arguments have been made by competent scholars to say that Jesus was crucified not on Friday but on Thursday, and others still have suggested on Wednesday.

And I've read their complete arguments, and to tell you the truth, it's fairly impossible for me to ascertain which is the correct date, nor does it matter in the least to me. I've never had any interest in the controversy, but there is such controversy, and I simply will say traditionally he was crucified on Friday and was arrested late the previous night, which means that he can hardly have had 12 hours between his arrest and his crucifixion. And yet there are many, many chapters in all four Gospels about this section of his life.

Now with that kind of overlap over such a small period, you'd think that John could not possibly continue his policy of omitting what the other Gospels include, and including what they exclude. And indeed he does not completely do so, but he does to a very large extent. There are events of that evening that are omitted by the other Gospels, which John includes, and there are those which the other Gospels, including John, omits.

And so as we go through it, we're going to of course focus primarily on John, because that's the book we're studying, but I will inform you of the portions in the other Gospels that are omitted, which John includes. Chapter 18, verse 1, When Jesus had spoken these words, meaning the prayer of John 17, and the previous discourse in the upper room, he went out with his disciples over the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now that garden in a couple of the Gospels is named for us, it's the Garden of Gethsemane.

The brook Kidron is to the east of Jerusalem, and from the actual wall of Jerusalem down to the brook is a drop of 200 feet, and then the Mount of Olives begins to rise on the other side, and just a little ways up the Mount of Olives, you have this garden, which is one of the few places in the Holy Land I've actually been. I have only been to Israel one time, and I was teaching for two weeks in Jerusalem, and didn't get out much. I got out a little bit, and it's not too hard to get from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives, it's just a little ways, and that is on the gradual slopes near on the Jerusalem side of the Mount of Olives.

This is the garden that he went to. Gethsemane apparently means olive press or oil press, which is interesting, perhaps, of course, it's the Mount of Olives. There's olive trees there, and olives are for pressing into olive oil, that's what they grew olives for, and there must have been in Jesus' day, you know, olive presses there, and they named it

the Garden of Olive Pressing.

Jesus was certainly pressed and pressured in that location, so much so that he sweat as it were great drops of blood. Now, the synoptics record at this point Jesus praying three times that if it were possible that God would remove this cup from him, and yet saying, nevertheless not my will but yours be done. Interestingly, John doesn't include that, but there seems to be an allusion to it down in verse 11 of this chapter, where when Jesus was arrested and Peter sought to rescue him, Jesus said to Peter, put away your sword into its sheath.

Shall I not drink the cup which my father has given me? Now, John has given no previous mention of that cup, although the synoptic gospels did, and so we can see how the synoptics and John dovetail with each other. Obviously, John presupposes that his readers know about those prayers, about, you know, let this cup pass from me, because he records Jesus saying, the cup that my father has given me, shall I not drink it? And yet, there are many other ways in which John alludes to things that the other gospels say, so that we know that, you know, it's not as if these are separate traditions that are in conflict with each other, as some people would like to say. Many people have suggested that the gospel of John is not really to be trusted, because the picture of Jesus that it presents is so different than the picture that is given in the three synoptic gospels, and that Jesus, of course, was the Jesus of the synoptics, and therefore he could not be the Jesus of the gospel of John, because his discourse is so different, there's no parables in his teaching in John, and he taught almost exclusively with parables in the synoptics, and so forth.

We've commented on this before, how the general thought that John does not harmonize with the synoptics is quite misleading and misled, because John does, in fact, dovetail with the synoptics, in fact, John's studied avoidance of repeating what the synoptics have said, seems like he could never have pulled that off so successfully had he not been very familiar with what the synoptics did say, and what he wished to not say, so that he could say different things than they said, not contrary things, additional things, and yet, even in what he records, we find allusions to the things he left out, which the synoptics record, including this statement about the cup. Now, verse 2, And Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons.

Now, this reference to a detachment of troops, in the Greek, it refers to a Roman cohort. In Jerusalem, in the fortress Antonia, which was in Jerusalem, there were a thousand Roman soldiers, and they were under a captain. At one time, a later captain there rescued Paul from a mob in the streets of Jerusalem in the final visit Paul made to Jerusalem when he was falsely accused of bringing a Gentile into the court of the Jews at the temple, and the Jews rioted and sought to kill him, and one of these captains, the

one at the time, Claudius Lysias, I believe his name was, actually came down and helped Paul and rescued him.

This captain, with his detachment of Roman troops, is not named for us, but it's interesting that the Romans got involved because Jesus had not yet been brought before a Roman court, and Jesus was not a threat to the Romans. He was a threat to the Sanhedrin. It's very important for us to realize that the Romans, though they crucified him, had no interest in crucifying him, and that's saying a lot for Romans because Romans like to crucify people.

They love to crucify anyone who even looked at them cross-eyed or in any way seemed to be unfavorable toward their regime, and yet it's obvious that the Romans had no particular interest in arresting or condemning Jesus. The leader of the Romans, Pilate, tried again and again to release Jesus and to go against the Jews' wishes that he should kill him. He only surrendered Jesus to them to be killed because they actually ended up claiming that if he didn't do so, that he was no friend of Caesar's, and that wouldn't look good on a resume for a Roman procurator.

So what's interesting is that Romans did come here. It wasn't just a Roman detachment, though. It was also officers of the chief priests and Pharisees.

These would be the temple police. These are the same people that were sent out in John 7 with a commission to arrest Jesus, and they came back empty-handed. These were the temple guards.

These were Levites. A certain group of Levites were assigned to be temple police to keep order in the temple, and apparently they and Romans together came to pick up Jesus. Now why the Romans would be there is a curious thing, but apparently the Jews already had this thing all planned out.

They intended to bring Jesus before Pilate the next morning. The Roman procurators typically would arise and try to start their business day at about sun up, around 6 o'clock, and they would try to be done with their business of the day by about 10 or 11. This is the normal Roman procedure of a government official.

We find that the Jews actually did bring Jesus to Pilate around 6 in the morning, and they probably had to get their case on his calendar, and it was a bit of a rush job because it was Passover time, and they wanted to get this all taken care of and cleaned up before Passover. So they had to get him into Pilate's court on the particular day, first thing in the morning. And so in order to do that, they had to take Jesus and find occasions to condemn him among themselves so they could bring an accusation to Pilate the next morning, and therefore they held all-night court sessions, which by the way was against their own rabbinic laws.

To hold a court at night was against the rabbinic law for the simple reason that it seemed too suspicious. Why would you hold court at night when people are sleeping? Why hold secret proceedings against somebody? It would be harder for him to call witnesses in his defense and so forth in the middle of the night, and therefore the rabbis actually had a law that they could not hold court at night. But the Sanhedrin in this case was not interested in obeying their own laws, but only in getting the job done that they wanted done in a timely manner.

But apparently in order to get on Pilate's court calendar for the next morning, they had to let Pilate know something about the case they were going to bring. And they apparently also at that time asked for a detachment of Roman soldiers to accompany them, suggesting that Jesus might have some disciples who might put up a fight, and that the Romans, in order to bring a prisoner to their own court, might be on hand to help with the arrest. They were not mistaken.

One of Jesus' disciples did put up a fight briefly, although Jesus made him stop, and it ended up being no problem at all to the Romans or the Jews in the arrest, except that Jesus knocked them all over with a few words. And no matter how many Romans they had with them, that wouldn't have helped them, because Jesus had apparently infinite power against any number of people that would come against him. But we see in verse 3 that the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees came there with the lanterns, torches, and weapons.

Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that would come upon him, went forward and said to them, Whom are you seeking? Now Jesus takes charge of the situation. He's the one they're coming to arrest. And he doesn't wait for them to speak.

He walks right up to them and says, Who are you looking for? And he just kind of initiates the situation. He takes charge. And we can see from what follows that he truly is in charge.

He truly is in command of the situation, though he's greatly outnumbered by those who have come to arrest him. They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. And Jesus said to them, I am he.

And Judas, who betrayed him, also stood with them. Then when he said to them, I am he, they drew back and fell to the ground. It is not known why they did this.

Some may feel like they did this in mockery of him, but it seems hardly likely that the Roman soldiers would... Roman soldiers just want to have fun? I don't think so. They're not fun-loving guys. They obviously are a no-nonsense, business-like machine.

And it seems that they fell over backward because they had no choice but to fall over backward. Now, Jesus said, I am he. In the Greek, that's ego eimi, which can be

translated, I am he, or it can be translated, I am.

There is no he in it. Ego eimi literally means I, I am. But it is also the normal way of saying, I am he.

So, we need to be careful about assuming too much about it. Obviously, when Jesus said, I am, we, in our minds, connect it with the divine name in the Old Testament, and probably rightly so. Back in John 8, in verse 58, Jesus said before Abraham was, I am, or ego eimi.

And that may be how his words would be taken now. Of course, Jesus wasn't speaking Greek. He didn't say ego eimi.

He said whatever the Aramaic equivalent was, because that was the language he spoke. Nonetheless, John has rendered it with the words ego eimi, and apparently means either I am he, or simply I am. In any case, what he said was powerful words, so the people fell over backward to the ground.

Then he asked them again, apparently after they recovered their feet, whom are you seeking? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. And Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he. Therefore, if you seek me, let these go their way, that the same might be fulfilled which he spoke of those whom you gave me, I have lost none.

Now, the saying which he spoke is a reference to something he said in his prayer in chapter 17, verse 12. He said, those whom you gave me I have kept, and none of them is lost except the son of perdition. And that's what is being quoted here in chapter 18, verse 9. John is quoting, it was sort of a double meaning.

Obviously, John knew that when Jesus made that statement in John 17, verse 12, that it was talking about spiritual safety. That he had not lost any of them to the enemy. He was not talking about keeping them safe physically.

In this case, though, John is apparently seeing Jesus keeping them safe from physical death as an analogy to him saving them from spiritual death also. Because he is here talking about how Jesus delivered them from arrest and probable crucifixion that they would have suffered. But his stratagem was to get his arrestors to verbally commit to whose name is on the warrant.

Who are you coming to arrest? Well, the warrant says Jesus of Nazareth. Okay, well that's me. That's not these people.

Let them go then, right? You just told me. I'm the one you want. I surrender.

Let them go. And so, in doing that, he prevented a wholesale arrest rounding up of everybody. If he had allowed them to initiate things, they might have just said, here,

catch them all, take them all in.

And instead, he started the conversation by making them commit to who it was they're coming to arrest. But first he showed them that he was very much the master of the situation. Had he wished to, he could have knocked them down over and over again all night long.

He said the same words both times, but without the same effect the second time. He wasn't interested in just knocking them down. He just wanted to show what he could do, I'm sure.

He wanted to show that no one can take his life from him. He has the power to lay it down and he has the power to take it up again, as he said in John chapter 10. No one was going to take his life.

He was going to surrender it. Therefore, when this detachment of Roman and Temple police came, he simply showed that he was not at their mercy. They were at his mercy.

And when he said, I am, they fell over backwards. When they got up, he decided, that's enough of that kind of demonstration. Now let's get back to business.

Who are you here for? Me. I'm the one. Okay, then you've committed yourself.

I'm the one, you've got the warrant to arrest these men. Obviously, they're not on your warrant. They can go then, right? And so he delivered his disciples from arrest on this occasion and thus, in a secondary sense, fulfilled that statement he made, of those that you've given me, I have lost none.

That is, none of them were arrested with him and none of them died with him on this occasion. Now, of course, the Synoptic Gospels include here something very significant and John, interestingly, leaves it out. And that is that Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss at some point.

All three Synoptic Gospels mention it and mention Jesus' response to him. He said something like, Friend, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss? But it's not mentioned in John, so it's not clear whether that happened before Jesus had this exchange with the soldiers or after. In any case, Judas did have a role in identifying him here.

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then Jesus said to Peter, Put your sword into the sheath.

Shall I not drink the cup which my Father has given me? Now, a couple things here. One is that the other Synoptics also mention that Jesus cut off, I mean that Peter cut off this man's ear. Luke alone mentions that Jesus healed the ear.

Matthew and Mark and Luke and John all mention this cutting off of the ear. Only Luke mentions that Jesus touched the man's ear and healed it, put it back together again, which must have been an amazing thing. Now, to the man himself.

The man was there to arrest Jesus, and here Jesus is healing him, doing him a favor, and telling Peter to put away his sword. Now, John alone tells us that this man had a name, Malchus, which means that John knew this man by name. Did he know him at this point in time? Perhaps, because the writer, as we shall see later, was acquainted with the high priest's family, and Malchus was a servant of the high priest, so maybe John, acquainted as he was with the high priest's family, we'll talk about how that could possibly be the case when we get to a later verse.

If he knew the family, he might well have known the servant's name. Depends on how well acquainted he was with the high priest's family. Or an alternate view is that this man, Malchus, had subsequently become a believer, and that by the time John wrote this, the whole church knew the man's name, because his testimony was well known among them.

He had been among those that arrested Jesus, and that Jesus had yet healed him, and he may have been a well-known name among the disciples. Although the other synoptics don't mention his name, and that might argue more for the idea that John, the writer of this gospel, happened to know his name because of his acquaintance with the high priest's family. Not important for us to solve that question, but it's an interesting one.

And then Jesus rebuking Peter, in this case. Now, Peter, no doubt, was intending well, but his attempt to rescue Jesus was obviously an amateurish attempt. Peter was a fisherman, not a fighter.

And there were two swords among the disciples. The other disciple, whichever one it was, had another sword. Must have been wise enough to keep it in his sheath.

We know from Luke's gospel that there were two swords among them. Peter, unfortunately, had one of them. And Peter drew his sword, and maybe having just woken up from sleeping, when he should have been staying awake, remember, Jesus had told them, the other gospels tell us, that Jesus had said, stay awake, watch and pray, that you don't fall into temptation.

Well, they didn't stay awake and pray, and therefore they did fall into temptation. And Jesus woke them as the arresting party was arriving. And Peter, being perhaps groggy, and maybe having had maybe a little more wine at the Passover meal the night before than was advisable, and I don't mean to suggest that any of the disciples were luscious, but I mean there was no stigma attached to drinking from four cups of wine at the dinner.

Maybe he was a little dizzy. Who knows? The point is he hoped to do some kind of lethal harm to the attackers, and the best he could do was strike off a man's right ear, which was a very clumsy thing indeed, because Peter probably was right-handed, and he'd most naturally sliced the left ear of a man facing him. But maybe the man has back to him, and he sliced his ear, or he was just so clumsy that he couldn't even hit a target at close range, and he sliced off the right ear.

In any case, Peter's help was not going to be helpful once more, so Jesus tells him to put away his sword. In this case, John tells us that the reason he tells Peter to put away his sword is because Jesus was now willing to drink the cup that the Father was giving him. He had prayed three times that that cup might be taken from him, but he said, not my will but yours be done, and lo and behold, it turned out it was not the will of God that he should be spared the cup, and so he recognized the sufferings he was about to face as the cup that his father was handing him, and he was going to accept that.

He was going to receive it, just like Job said, but shall we receive only the good things from the Lord and not the evil things also? To be resigned to God's will when you know it is God's will, when a situation is out of your control, when it is something that God has determined by providence or by revelation to be what he wants you to go through, for you to resign yourself to it and say this is the cup my father has given me, I'll drink it, is very much the attitude of both Job and Jesus and frankly every godly man we encounter in the Bible. The recognition that some sufferings cannot be avoided because they are the will of God. And Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 4, I think it's verse 19, he says, Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in doing well as unto a faithful creator.

That is, if it's the will of God for you to suffer, that's what starts out, those who suffer according to the will of God, what shall we do? Well, we shall commit ourselves to our faithful creator as we put our case in his hands instead of in our own. How do we commit our case into his hands? By continuing to do the same thing that's getting us in trouble. By continuing to do good.

If you're suffering for doing good, Peter says, then continue to do good and thus you put your case entirely in God's hands. You're not rescuing yourself through compromising, but you don't compromise and you let the matter fall into the hands of God and let him decide what shall happen. Remember David said, Let me fall into the hands of God, not the hands of men, for his mercies are everlasting.

And Jesus, of course, put himself in the hands of God. In fact, his dying words were, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. Of course, that didn't save his life.

And that's the important thing to note, that when you surrender yourself into the hands of God and resign yourself to his will, that doesn't mean, that's not a bargaining chip with God. Okay, now that you've done that, he's got to deliver you. No, when you

surrender, that means you've got to be surrendered to whatever he decides, even if that's your death.

But of course, because he died in the hand of God, he also was able to be risen in the hand of God and that's so he was vindicated after all. But he had to drink this cup that his father was giving him. In Matthew's version, it's interesting the various ways in which Matthew tells us Jesus answered Peter on this occasion.

In Matthew 26, 52, this is Jesus' answer to Peter. In Matthew 26, 52, Jesus said to him, Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to my father and he will provide me with more than 12 legions of angels? How then could the scriptures be fulfilled that it must happen thus? And so there's two different arguments given by Jesus to Peter why he should put away his sword in Matthew and a third in John.

In Matthew, the first one is those who take the sword will perish by the sword. Now, frankly, this is not necessarily an absolutely true maxim. Many people have had lives of soldiery, have had lives of police work.

Many people have lived by their weapons and by their fighting and warfare and have not died in war. They've retired and survived and died peaceably in their beds. It's not a proverb or a maxim or a truism that those who use the sword will necessarily perish by the sword, although it is, of course, the case that when one is depending on his sword for his security, he has nothing better than that to depend upon and he may find himself outgunned by his opponent and is certainly at risk of perishing by the same means by which he seeks to live.

But I think in this case, Jesus' words must mean something like this to Peter. We are outnumbered here. Any of you who seek to save his life by using the sword will die that way.

It certainly would be the case. If the disciples would pull their swords out and start fighting these Romans, every one of the disciples would lie dead by the end of that skirmish. And that any of us in this situation who seek to survive by using our swords will find that we will die by using our swords.

It's similar to what Jesus said about whosoever seeks to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake shall find it. He's essentially saying we don't need swords to protect us here because if I wished I could call for twelve legions of angels that would be more than enough to get us out of this situation but then how would the scripture be fulfilled that says this must happen.

So, there's three ways Jesus speaks to Peter as an argument to put away his sword. One is that he's inviting his own death. That is, Peter is inviting his own death if he seeks to

survive by the use of his sword.

So, put it away. Secondly, we don't need swords. We have the angels.

If we wished we could call on the angels and God would send them and we'd be well protected. He has given his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways and in their hands they will bear thee up lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. So, we don't need to worry about human attackers when God's angels are available to protect us in the will of God.

But the third thing he said is apparently what John records. And he says, shouldn't I be resigned to this? This is the cup my father has given me. It must be the cup he intends for me to drink.

My father is the one I'm here to please, not myself. And if it pleases him to bruise me, and that's what it says in Isaiah 53, it pleased the Lord to bruise him, that is Jesus. Well, then that's the cup my father wants me to have.

If it pleases him, if it pleases me, I will drink the cup that he gives me. That is the attitude of Jesus and the attitude of every godly person in a similar situation. In verse 12 then, it says, Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.

And they led him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year. Now it was Caiaphas who gave counsel to the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. Now, this interview before Annas is entirely omitted by the Synoptic Gospels.

If you read the Synoptics, they only focus on Jesus being taken before the Sanhedrin, which was superintended by Caiaphas. And John acknowledges that this happened too, but John indicates that before he was taken before the Sanhedrin, before he was taken to Caiaphas, he was taken first to Annas, the high priest. Now, Annas was the older high priest.

According to Luke 3, 2, when Luke is giving us the political line-up of how things stood in Jerusalem and Judea and Galilee, in the time when John the Baptist began preaching, he mentions Annas and Caiaphas being high priests. That is, there were two high priests. Now, the law of Moses only allowed for one high priest, but in the days of the Maccabeans, after the Maccabean Revolt, or even before that, in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Syrian domination, the high priesthood was greatly compromised by basically being given to the highest bidder.

The Syrian overlord, Antiochus Epiphanes, sold the high priesthood to the Jew that would give him the most money. And there were many intrigues, and many high priests were assassinated by rivals and so forth. It was really messed up.

The hereditary priesthood of Aaron was greatly compromised in the two centuries before the time of Christ. And I'm not sure exactly what hereditary basis Annas had to be a high priest, but he was the more popular high priest among the Jews. And he had been the high priest from 6 A.D. to 15 A.D. In other words, from the time Jesus was about 10 years old until he was about 19.

And Annas had been removed. He had been appointed, first of all, by Quirinius, the governor of Syria, in 6 A.D. And then in the year 15, he had been removed by Valerius Gratus, who was the prefect of Judea at the time, an office that Pilate later held. Now, three years later, in 18 A.D., Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas, was appointed by this same Valerius Gratus.

And he held that office for 18 years, which is the longest any high priest in the first century held office. And he remained high priest after Valerius Gratus left that position to Pontius Pilate. And Pontius Pilate, for whatever reason, left Caiaphas in position, probably because he was less popular and less powerful among the Jews than Annas was, and less of a competitor for their loyalties.

Caiaphas was son-in-law to Annas. Annas had five of his own sons succeed him as priest, and one son-in-law, and one grandson, too. So, Annas' family really controlled the priesthood for some time.

But, although Annas had been deposed by the Romans, many of the Jews respected him more than they respected Caiaphas. He was the high priest emeritus. Retired, sort of like we talk about retired presidents as still president.

And so, also, Jesus was a notable prisoner. Annas had an interest in it. In honor of the older man, they took Jesus before Annas first to get his licks in, and then they would take him before the court formally, which was going to be superintended by Caiaphas.

Okay, so, he went before Annas. And before we read what happened there, we have interjected this little story about Peter's first of three denials. John, unlike the other Gospels, divides up the denials of Jesus into different parts of the story, interweaving it.

It says in verse 15, And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now, that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door outside.

Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in. Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you? And he said, I am not. And the servants of the officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves, and Peter stood with them and warmed himself.

Now, this was of course the first time that Peter denied Christ. There would be three. And

in Mark's Gospel, in Mark 14, 68, it says, As soon as Peter denied him this first time, the cock crowed.

Now, you might say, well, isn't that a bit early? I thought the cock was supposed to crow after Jesus denied him three times. Well, in Mark's Gospel, when Jesus makes the prediction, it's Mark 14, verse 30, He says to Peter, Before the cock crows twice, you will have denied me three times. So as Mark tells the story, the first time Peter denied the Lord, he heard the cock crow the first time.

Which should have been the warning to him. That sounds like the beginnings of the fulfillment of this prediction. I better guard myself not to do that anymore.

But instead, he denied Jesus two more times, and then the cock crowed the second time. And that's when Peter recognized that he had fulfilled the predictions of Jesus about this. Now, the other Gospels only mention that Jesus said, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.

But there's no reason to assume that that is not harmonious with before the cock crows twice. The other Gospels are obviously compressing the narrative. Mark gives more detail.

And so the cock crowed one time after this first denial, though none of the Gospels mention that except Mark. Now, what John mentions, if the others do not, is that Peter and another disciple, unnamed, followed Jesus, apparently at a distance, so that they wouldn't be... I mean, they abandoned him in the garden. But once they saw that they were not being pursued, and that Jesus was taken off in chains, or in bonds, they followed at a distance.

Now, the unnamed disciple is generally believed to be the same one who's called the disciple whom Jesus loved. Generally speaking, an unnamed disciple in this Gospel is the author. It's John himself.

But many have thought it would be very unlikely that a fisherman from Galilee would be on a personal acquaintance basis with an aristocratic Levite from Jerusalem, who was the high priest. That's like an archbishop being friendly with his fishmonger. You know? It just doesn't seem likely to many people.

But we have to remember something. And that is that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were first cousins of Jesus. Their mother was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

We'll actually see that before this chapter is over, if you didn't know that. Jesus' mother was sister to the mother of James and John. Therefore, they were first cousins.

Now, Jesus' mother, and therefore their mother, was related to Elizabeth, who was

married to a priest. This family was connected by marriage to a priestly family. In growing up, we have no idea how much these families interacted socially.

But it's clear that Jesus' family and therefore John's family were connected in some way by relationship to the priests. And could well have become acquainted, maybe not dear friends, but just acquainted with the high priest. Enough so that the servants at the high priest's house wouldn't recognize him and would let him in.

Now Peter was not so sure he wanted to be let into the courtyard. Once he's in the courtyard, the gatekeeper might not be so quick to let him out. Now what's interesting is that though John was a disciple of Jesus, he was not afraid to go right into the high priest's house.

He was not paranoid like Peter was. Peter was afraid. Peter had argued in the upper room that he was more courageous than the other disciples at the table.

Remember, he said, Lord, even if all the others forsake you, I'll never forsake you. I'm willing to die for you. And that's when Jesus spoke to him and told him he's much too self-confident that he's going to actually deny him three times.

And yet, it turns out, there was another at the table, probably John, who was actually bolder than Peter was. He went right on into the high priest's house to see what would happen. Peter was barely willing to come in the courtyard at all and did not go into the house with John.

But John came out and told the servant girl to let him in. She apparently knew that John was a disciple. He was not secretive about it.

He was following Jesus. That's what he was there for. And when she said to Peter, You're not one of this man's disciples, are you? It's almost as if she's saying, I know John is.

Are you also one of them? You're with him? And Peter said, No, no, I'm not with him. I'm not one of the disciples. And so, Peter's first denial takes place here.

Now, in verse 19, we resume the story of what takes place at Annas' house. The Synoptic Gospels do not record anything about this. But you'll see in verses 19 through 24, we have Jesus before Annas.

And at the end of this section, in verse 24, it says, Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest. Now, it's his hearing before Caiaphas that the Synoptics record in detail. John only mentions that he went before Caiaphas, but tells us nothing about it.

Because in verse 28, he then says, Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, which was Pilate. Now, what actually happened when you put the story of all four Gospels together is this. Jesus stood trial three times in one night before Jewish tribunals,

and the next day three times before Roman tribunals.

You don't get all of that in any one Gospel. But we see by putting John together with the Synoptics, that the first place Jesus stood to be examined was the house of Annas, a Jew. The second place was before the Sanhedrin, with Caiaphas presiding.

That was after he'd been in Annas' house. And we see that here in verses 24. Well, just 24.

And then Matthew tells us, and the other Synoptics, that after that, after they condemned him before the Sanhedrin, the Sanhedrin met again just before dawn to deliberate how they would present their case to Pilate. Because the Jews did not have the right under Roman law to execute a man for the kinds of things that they were hoping to get him killed for. And so, they had to come up with some other kind of story to present to Pilate so that Pilate, the Roman, would give authorization to have him killed.

Well, in the morning then, they brought him to Pilate. And he had a trial before Pilate. And then Pilate found out, according to Luke's Gospel, that Jesus was from Galilee.

So he thought, this is not my jurisdiction, this is Herod's jurisdiction. He sent him to Herod. So he stood trial before Herod, where Jesus remained absolutely silent.

And then Herod, being disillusioned with him, he had been hoping to see a miracle and saw none, sent him back to Pilate. So Pilate had to try him again, finish trying him, and condemned him. So we have three Jewish court appearances and three Roman court appearances within twelve hours' time.

Like, in twelve hours' time, Jesus had to be in six different trials. And so, we only really read details of the one Jewish trial here at Annas' house. And John skips over both of the other times when the Sanhedrin met.

But mentions it, but skips over the details. But here's what he tells us about what went on in Annas' house. Verse 19, The high priest then asked Jesus about his disciples and his doctrine.

Why? We don't know. Apparently he's trying to find out how big the movement is, what kind of subversive things Jesus has taught them, how much damage has been done, how many people they're going to have to round up. And Jesus, of course, protects his disciples and doesn't give them answers to those questions.

Jesus answered him, I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet. And in secret, I've said nothing.

Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them. Indeed, they

know what I said. Essentially what Jesus is saying is if this is a trial, you should be able to read the charges to me, not ask me to recite charges against myself.

Do you have witnesses? Isn't that how court trials are conducted? There are plenty of witnesses to what I said. You don't have to ask me. I don't have to incriminate myself in this court.

If you want to know what I taught, it was publicly taught. There's lots of witnesses, probably some of them right here in this room. Ask them.

Well, this seemed a little too flip to those who are sympathetic toward Annas for a man on trial to speak to the judge this way. And he said, when he said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, do you answer the high priest like that? And Jesus answered him, if I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil. But if well, why do you strike me? Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest.

Jesus' answer was, listen, if I've done something wrong, read the charges. Tell me what I've done wrong. If I have anything wrong, then why am I being struck? Why am I being on trial? Tell me what the charges are.

If I've done evil, tell me what it is. And they couldn't, of course. Now, Paul also on trial was in a similar situation where he got struck because he answered a little too flippantly to the high priest also.

You remember that story? That's in Acts chapter 23. It ended differently. But there are some similarities to it.

In Acts chapter 23, Paul was on trial before the Sanhedrin also. And in verse 1, it says, Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. Now that shouldn't be an offensive thing for men.

He's basically saying, I'm innocent of all charges. Isn't a man allowed to plead innocent? And the high priest Ananias on this occasion commanded those who stood by to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, God will strike you.

You whitewashed wall. For you sit to judge me according to the law. And do you command me to be struck contrary to the law? And those who stood by said, Do you revile God's high priest? Then Paul said, I didn't know, brethren, that he was the high priest.

For it is written, You shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people. So Paul backed down on this one. He says he didn't know the man was the high priest.

There's some question that is raised. Why wouldn't Paul know? I mean, he had once been in the Sanhedrin himself, or at least attached to the Sanhedrin as a protege of Gamaliel. How could he not know who the high priest was? Now, of course, some have said, Well, Paul's eyes were bad, and he'd been away from Jerusalem for many decades traveling.

There had been no doubt a change in the high priesthood, and he was half blind. And so he didn't realize that the man who commanded him to be struck was the high priest. That's entirely possible.

Others feel like he knew very well it was the high priest, but was saying something like, Oh, I didn't know such a person who would give an order like that could be the high priest. Ironically or sarcastically. Oh, you mean that a high priest would give such an unjust order? I never would have thought that kind of an answer.

In any case, he did back down and said, It is written, You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people. You see, Paul apologized because he actually had insulted the high priest. But Jesus hadn't insulted anybody.

He just said, I will not incriminate myself, but you can bring witnesses if you want to. They can tell you what I've said, if you want to know. That's not an insult to the high priest.

It's just not what he wanted to hear. And they struck Jesus for that. And he didn't back down.

He indicated that they were the ones in the wrong, not him. Then in verse 24, Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest. Now Simon Peter stood and warmed himself.

Therefore they said to him, You are not also one of his disciples, are you? And he denied it and said, I am not. Now, between that denial and the last one, which is reported in the next verses, Luke tells us there was about an hour. In Luke 22, verse 59, after the second denial, it says an hour later, this third occasion happened.

We're not told about that hour here. But in Luke 22, 59, it tells us there was a passage of an hour between the second and third denials. One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did I not see you in the garden with him? And Peter denied again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

Peter's getting more and more nervous. The last man who asked him was actually a relative of the man he'd attacked and had been there and seen him. Obviously, you know, to admit that he was who that man thought he was while he's there, as it were, locked in the courtyard of the high priest's house would be a very dangerous situation.

And Peter was not really willing to die for Jesus at this point. And so he denied it again. Then Peter denied again.

Immediately a rooster crowed. And the other Gospels mention that Peter, realizing what he'd done, went out and wept bitterly. It doesn't mention that here, but it does mention in chapter 21 that Jesus apparently alluded to this matter and restored Peter and made sure he had repented about that.

In verse 28, then they led Jesus from Caiaphas. This would be after two trials before Caiaphas, reported in Matthew 26. They led Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium, which means the official Roman procurator's headquarters.

And it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the praetorium lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. Now, the Passover apparently was to be slain that day, as Jesus was, as the Passover.

And so they expected to eat it that night, but they didn't want to become defiled by going into Gentiles' house. There was nothing in the law that said they could not go into Gentiles' house, but perhaps they were concerned there might be leaven in the house, and they did not want to expose themselves to that at Passover season. They had to avoid all leaven at all costs.

The Jews in general thought it not a good thing to go into a Gentiles' house for various reasons. There's many unclean things in a Gentiles' house that the Jews would find unclean, and therefore going into a Gentiles' house was always risky if you didn't want to become ceremonially defiled. So they would not go in to Pilate.

He had to come out to them. But this is perhaps one of those instances of Johannine irony, as they call it, where John says something that's actually humorous, but it's snide, it's ironic. It's not an outright joke, but it would have to make you chuckle if you think about it.

He says they wouldn't go into his house because they didn't want to be defiled. Now here they were, perpetrating the greatest crime against an innocent party, and trying to corrupt the court system to condemn a man to death who had done nothing wrong, and they didn't want to be defiled by going into a Gentiles' house because they wanted to eat the Passover. I mean, the hypocrisy of these people is transparent here.

And Pilate then went out to them and said, what accusation do you bring against this man? And they answered and said to him, if he were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered him to you. Now their answer to him sounds a little indignant. Now his question of them is the typical way that a court hearing would be opened up.

The judge would say, what are the charges against this man? That's all he asks. And they're a little upset with Pilate for asking, why? In all likelihood, when they had gotten

this court date on the calendar, they had hoped that Pilate would just let them decide whether this man was worthy of death or not, and would just give his rubber stamp to their sentence. The Romans and the Jewish courts did not work real friendly with each other.

But sometimes the Romans didn't want any trouble. And so they just, Romans didn't care about the blood of innocent Jews. So, Sanhedrin probably had hoped that simply by telling Pilate in advance, which they no doubt had done, that the man who deserves to die, their courts are going to find him guilty, and they need Pilate's rubber stamp to approve of his death.

That Pilate would just say, okay, go ahead. But it's clear when Pilate said, what charges do you bring against this man, that Pilate was intending to open the court case from scratch. In other words, he was not just going to trust in what they had decided in their court.

He was going to try them by Roman law. Which would be a little trickier for them. Because Jesus clearly had not broken any Roman law.

And now they're going to have to make a case to convince the Roman judge that Jesus had done something that the Romans would be offended by. Now, what had they accused Jesus of? Well, the Synoptic Gospels tell us that in the midnight court hearing before the Sanhedrin, what they finally found against him was the high priest asked him, are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed? And he said, yes. And the priest tore his robe and said, what more do we have need of witnesses? We've heard with our own ears, he's blaspheming.

Now, of course, to say that you're the Messiah was never, there's no precedent in Jewish court for that being called blasphemy. Lots of Jews said they're Messiah and they were never brought to trial about it. Not by the Jews, usually by the Romans.

But the point, and that was because Messiah meant leader of a revolt against Rome in their minds. But Jesus obviously wasn't that. And they couldn't even accuse him of that very convincingly.

But they thought by calling himself the Son of God, he had blasphemed. Now, blasphemy in Jewish law would be punishable by death. The problem was the Romans couldn't care less.

About a man blaspheming the Jewish God. I mean, the Romans would probably happily blaspheme the Jewish God and think it fun. They didn't care about the Jewish God.

So, the Jewish court had condemned Jesus of blasphemy against Yahweh. But that wouldn't fly in a Roman court. Why would the Romans care about that? They had to come up with an entirely new charge against Jesus now.

And what they brought up was that he said he was king of the Jews, as we shall see. And that means, if he's king of the Jews, then that sounds like a political insurrectionist. A man who's putting himself up in competition to Caesar as the ruler of Judea.

And that could be seen as a political charge the Romans might care about. However, if they had given Pilate any indication of these charges before this, he was not buying it. And we can see that throughout these proceedings, Pilate wasn't buying anything of these accusations.

He was extremely favorable to Jesus through the whole proceedings. Even Peter said in Acts 2, when he's preaching the gospel on Pentecost, he said to the Jews, you forced Pilate to turn him over to die even when Pilate was determined to let him go. Now, why was Pilate so favorable toward Jesus? Pilate was not a merciful man.

His atrocities are known from secular history. He was like most Romans, a heartless ruler over a subject people. Even in Luke chapter 13, it tells us of how Pilate shed the blood of innocent Galileans while they were offering their sacrifices in the temple.

Apparently, they were in there worshiping God and Pilate sent his troops in just to slaughter them, just for good measure. Pilate was a bloody and unjust man. So, why was he so generous toward Jesus? Well, there's a number of reasons, probably not the least of which is he was impressed by Jesus' demeanor when he faced him face to face.

Maybe even before that. Jesus had done a lot of public ministry in Jerusalem and Pilate was there. Actually, Jesus had ridden in on a donkey with a whole bunch of people throwing palm branches down about five days before this.

That looked like the kind of thing the Romans would want to look into. When people are saying, Hail, King of the Jews! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the one who brings the kingdom of God, Father David. That's what they were saying about Jesus.

That's just the kind of thing the Romans like to stomp on. And it was done publicly and loudly. In fact, the Jewish leaders objected and told Jesus, This is going to get us all in trouble.

Tell your people to be quiet. The Romans are going to come down here and hurt us because of this. But the Romans didn't.

I wonder how much research Pilate had previously done into Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus had been a public figure for several years and talked about throughout Jerusalem. I'm sure that Pilate had his eyes and ears all over the place just listening for any kind of intelligence about movements that could be a threat to his power.

He could hardly have failed to have heard about Jesus. And in my opinion, he probably had a complete file on him. Remember, people had come to Jesus once and asked him, Is

it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar or not? Well, if Jesus had been a zealot leader, he would have said, No, it's not lawful to pay tribute to Caesar.

That was the position the zealots took. But Jesus said, Well, whose face is on the coin? Caesar's. Give back to Caesar what's his.

And to God what's his. Jesus didn't sound like somebody who was trying to overthrow the Roman authority saying give them what they need, what they should have, and give God what he should have. I believe Pilate probably had a file on Jesus already and knew very well that Jesus was no threat to Rome.

And the very fact that the Jews wanted Jesus dead proved that. Because the Jews would have been favorable toward Jesus if he was anti-Roman. The Jews were anti-Roman.

He couldn't figure out why the leaders of the Jews wanted Jesus dead. Because Jesus did not seem to be a threat to the Jews that he could see. And he knew that if Jesus really was a threat to Rome, the Jews would leave him alone.

And would actually probably see him as a hero. So why were the Jews bringing Jesus to him? And I think Pilate was curious to know. In the course of these trials, we know from Luke that Pilate's wife sent him a message.

She said, I've been troubled by a dream all night that doesn't have anything to do with an innocent man. I think he really wanted to just get rid of this case and just exonerate Jesus and let him go. I think he even wanted to irk the Jews.

Because he was not friendly toward them. And the fact that they wanted Jesus dead so much and he couldn't find any complaint Rome would have against him. I think he even wanted to just bug the Jews by letting him go too.

It didn't work out that way though. But we do see Pilate not just buying the Jews' story. And he says, so he opens the proceedings from scratch.

He says, what charges do you bring against this man? And they, seeing that he's not just accepting their verdict against Jesus at face value, they say, listen, we wouldn't have brought him to you if he hadn't done something wrong. Are you suggesting he hasn't done anything wrong? Our courts have found him guilty. We wouldn't have brought him to you unless he was an evildoer, they say.

Verse 31, then Pilate said to them, you take him and judge him according to your law. And by this I'm sure he was kind of mocking them a little bit. Because he knew they wanted to kill him.

And yet, they needed his permission. But he's just toying with them. Therefore the Jews said to him, it is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.

And John says, that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spoke signified by what death he would die. Back in John chapter 12, Jesus had said, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men to me. And John said, thus he signified the means by which he died.

Being lifted up, meaning on a cross. If the Jews had killed him, he'd be stoned to death, as Stephen was. They didn't hang people.

The Jews didn't hang people, they stoned them. But Jesus had predicted that he'd be lifted up. And John had said in John chapter 12, thus he signified by what death he would die.

Meaning by crucifixion. Now, only the Romans crucified. So the Jews acknowledging that they didn't have the authority under Roman law to execute him, meant that he would not get stoned, but he would get crucified as he predicted.

And that's what John points out. Then Pilate entered the praetorium again and called Jesus. Now, here we have a private interview between Pilate and Jesus, which is not recorded in the other Gospels.

But, of course, John includes what they do not. Pilate entered the praetorium again and called Jesus and said to him, Are you the king of the Jews? Now, this had not been mentioned in the proceedings so far, at least on record here. So it may be that the Jews had already, when they put this on the docket in advance, said we're going to bring you a man who says he's the king of the Jews.

So be ready to condemn him. Anyway, he said, Are you the king of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Are you speaking for yourself on this, or did others tell you about me? You know, is this what you perceive to be about me? Are you wondering because it matters to you? Or is this just someone else's idea that you're just parroting? And Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? In other words, what should I care? I'm not a Jew. I'm a Roman.

Why would I care if you're the king of the Jews? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you to me. What have you done? That's what Pilate could never figure out. through these proceedings.

Why did the Jews hate Jesus? What had he done? He certainly hadn't done anything against Rome. Here he's asking Jesus to confide in him. Tell me, just between ourselves, what did you do to make these people mad at you? It's obvious Pilate didn't think Jesus had done anything against Rome or else he wouldn't be asking Jesus to be so frank about it.

But he knew it was the Jews that were against him. In the other Gospels it says that Pilate knew that it was because of jealousy that the Jews had turned him over to him. So he knew that Jesus was innocent.

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight so that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from here.

Now his kingdom was not from here. It certainly was here. He's admitting to being a king and having a kingdom.

It's just not a kingdom that originates from this world. There are kingdoms that do. In fact, all other kingdoms do.

His alone originates from heaven. His is the kingdom of or from heaven. From God.

The kingdom of God. All other kingdoms were worldly kingdoms. They originated with human, political and military coups and things like that.

And that's how kingdoms get started of this world. He says, Now if I had that kind of a kingdom, obviously my servants wouldn't have just stood by idly while I got arrested. There were other zealot leaders who proclaimed themselves to be Messiahs and got themselves killed by the Romans.

But their people fought. Their people were warlike. Their people were willing to kill Romans.

Jesus said, My disciples, you wouldn't have taken me this easy if my kingdom was of this world. If my disciples were permitted to fight, and they would be if it was a kingdom of this world. Notice that.

Jesus indicated that if I had an earthly kingdom, then it would be, of course, appropriate for my servants to fight. There's nothing really wrong, apparently, with an earthly nation putting up a military defense against invasion and against attack. Kingdoms of this world do that.

Jesus said, If my kingdom was one of those, it would do too. We'd do it. But we're not.

We're not that kind of kingdom. It's a different kind of kingdom. It's from heaven.

And therefore we don't operate on the same principles. Our warfare is not an earthly warfare. It's a spiritual warfare.

And so my kingdom isn't really from here. Pilate, therefore, said to him, Are you a king, then? Now, have you just admitted that you're a king? You said, My kingdom. Does that mean you're saying you're a king? Maybe there is something to what these Jews are saying against you.

You're admitting to be a king? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. Now, the New King James sticks in the word rightly, but that's in italics. Jesus' actual words are, You say

that I'm a king.

In other words, he didn't commit himself before Pilate. He just said, You say it. Those are your words.

I didn't use those words. For this cause I was born. And for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.

Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice. My purpose is not here to set up some kind of a political kingdom in opposition to Rome, if that's what you're worried about. I'm here to testify to the truth, that's all.

And everyone who is of the truth hears and believes what I have to say. If you want to call me a king, you can call me the king of the truth. Because that's all I'm here to do, is to tell the truth.

And Pilate said, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, I find no fault in him at all. Now, when he said, What is truth? Most people assume that Pilate was asking a deeply philosophical question. You know, What is truth? You know, like he's a great philosopher wondering, I've always wondered what truth is.

How do you define truth? I think in all likelihood, Pilate's just expressing his frustration, saying, What is the truth of this case? You know, What is the truth here? You know, I'm not getting anything from you. I know the Jews are not telling me the truth. What's the truth here? I'm a judge.

I'm supposed to decide on the side of what's right. You say you came to testify to the truth. What's the truth here? I don't know if that's what he's saying.

I mean, he might be saying, What is truth? And, you know, everyone wants to make Pilate out to be asking that question. Of course, then they say he asked the question of the one person who could tell him the answer and then turned around and left before he could hear the answer. It does say after Pilate said this, he left the presence of Jesus and went out and talked to the people.

We don't know if he just turned on his heels right then and didn't give Jesus a chance to answer. But Jesus was being reticent. We know from the other Gospels that Pilate actually sent him to Herod and Jesus was absolutely silent before Herod.

Jesus was going to talk when he wanted to talk and not at other times. And he wasn't really giving out much information here. Except that his kingly authority was not of a political sort necessarily.

It was the authority that comes with truth that he speaks. It's always the truth that has

authority. And Pilate, although no doubt frustrated with Jesus, had to admit, I haven't found any Roman law that this man has violated.

I can't find any fault in him at all. Now he's not saying that Jesus is a sinless man, although Christians often will affirm that this is true and he was. And sometimes they say even Pilate said he was sinless.

That's not exactly what Pilate is saying. Pilate is saying, you brought him here for me to condemn him and I don't see any breach of law he's guilty of. I don't see that he's done anything that should concern me at all.

I think I'm going to have to let him go. But he says, you have a custom that I should release someone to you at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release to you the king of the Jews? And we're using the term king of the Jews, he was needling them a little bit.

Because he didn't like the Jews. In fact, we find later when he put an inscription over Jesus on the cross that said, the king of the Jews. The Jewish leaders came and said, don't put on there that he's the king of the Jews.

He said he was the king of the Jews. And Pilate said, well I've written, I've written. Now that may mean that Pilate was very impressed with Jesus or it might have meant that he just wanted to bother the Jews.

Because they didn't like the idea of him being called king of the Jews and he wanted to leave it that way. But it says, but they all cried again saying, not this man, but Barabbas. And we're told now Barabbas was a robber.

Now this custom of the Romans releasing one prisoner at the time of Passover has no secular confirmation or documentation to it. And many people have suspected that it isn't the case. But all four Gospels record it.

And that's four independent historical witnesses. That's more witnesses than we have for many things. And so obviously the witness of the Gospels is adequate to establish that there was this custom.

How it came to be, we don't know. Some feel that the Romans had simply taken it over from the earlier Herodian dynasty. And that the Herodians had taken it over from the Hasmonean dynasty before that, which was a Jewish rule of the land.

Which came to an end when the Romans conquered the area. And that the Romans simply kept some of the policies in place to avoid offending the Jews too much. But even if that is true, we don't know how the Jews would have established this habit.

It's possible that they did so because the Passover commemorated the release of their

captivity in Egypt. And as an emblem of that, they would release one prisoner from jail at Passover. Sort of as a ceremonial way of celebrating the release from slavery or from prison in Egypt that they were celebrating at that time at Passover.

No one knows if that's how it began, but it has been suggested and it's a possible answer that would make a little bit of sense. What we need to say about Barabbas, however, is that in both Luke and Mark, the crimes of Barabbas are listed as murder and insurrection. But here our translation says he was a robber, which sounds pretty tame compared to murder and insurrection.

Both Matthew and Mark say that he had made insurrection against Rome, which is just the kind of thing that Rome would crucify a man for, and that he had committed murder. So some have had trouble with the fact that John just says he was a robber. But the problem is removed when you realize that the word robber used here in the Greek, which is *lestes* in the Greek, is consistently used by Josephus to mean a person who's committed insurrection against Rome.

In other words, it's not really talking about a robber, it's more like a brigand, more like an outlaw in general. And Josephus uses this same word always to refer to a zealot insurgent against Rome. And so that agrees with what both Matthew and Mark say about him, but it doesn't look like it in English.

So here we have the irony. They are accusing Jesus before Pilate, trying to get Pilate to approve the killing by saying he's an insurgent against Rome. He's an enemy of Rome.

And so Pilate says, who shall I release at this festival? They say, how about Barabbas? Well, wait a minute, isn't he an insurgent against Rome? You know, it's just these people are not making sense. Pilate can't figure out what's going on with these people. They're accused, they want to see Jesus dead.

And they say it's because he's an insurgent. But if that were true, why wouldn't they want Barabbas dead? He was an insurgent. They want him released.

And so Pilate knows there's something else going on here, but he can't get a handle on what it is. And neither can we, because there's no real rational reason why the Jews should be so upset with Jesus. Except, of course, that they were, as it says in one of the Gospels, jealous.

They were jealous because he was too popular and he was not one of them. That he was being recognized by too many people as the Messiah. And if he came to power, that would mean the present leadership of the Jews would go out of power.

Because they obviously weren't on his team or he wasn't on theirs. So there was jealousy there, and that's apparently the only motive that can be figured out for this. And that's what Pilate himself concluded.

We need to quit there. We're right in the middle of this trial of Jesus, but we'll continue it next time.