

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will do Bible study together from John chapter 18.

(S) **STEP 1. READ.**

Let us read John chapter 18 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read John chapter 18 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER.**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in John chapter 18. "Which truth in this passage is important for you?" or "Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?" Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is that Jesus was all the time in complete control of his death. He did not die as a victim. But he gave himself voluntarily to die for me.

The first sign that Jesus was fully in control of the situation was that he knew beforehand what was going to happen. John 18:4 says, "Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, 'Who is it you want?'" Without fear Jesus confronted his would-be captors as they came out to him with swords and clubs.

The second sign that Jesus was fully in control of the situation, was that he deliberately came out to them. Jesus did not flee away from the danger. He also did not hide until they found him. Instead, he took the initiative and came out to them! He came out of the darkness of the trees in the Garden of Gethsemane to face his enemies. When he stood there right in front of them, according to Matthew 26:49, Judas embraced Jesus and kissed him, saying "Hail, Rabbi!" This was the pre-arranged sign for the soldiers, temple-police and Sanhedrin officials to arrest Jesus. This was a very mean act: Judas chose the most sacred night, that of the Passover, the most sacred place, the place where Jesus prayed, and the most sacred symbol, a kiss, to betray his own Master! This was even ridiculous, because Jesus took the initiative to come out to them and to hand himself over to them!

The third sign that Jesus was fully in control of the situation, was that his would-be captors had no power against him! Jesus identified himself and said, "I am Jesus, the man from Nazareth." When he identified himself, his would-be captors lost their footing and fell backwards to the ground! They had not expected that Jesus would take matters into his own hands and come up to them! His authority as the King of kings radiated from the look in his eyes and the tone in his voice!

The fourth sign that Jesus was fully in control of the situation, was that he did not allow one of his own disciples to be captured with him.

When his would-be captors confirmed that they came to arrest him, Jesus said, "If you are looking for me, then let these men go." Even in his greatest hour of suffering Jesus was still the Good Shepherd who cared for his own sheep. He did not want his disciples to be captured and tortured at this time, because this might have been too severe a test for their faith. By doing this, Jesus fulfilled another prophecy he had made several times before, "He had not lost one of those God the Father gave to him." (Jn 6:39; 10:28; 17:12).

The fifth sign that Jesus was fully in control of the situation, was that he was completely determined to lay down his life for his sheep.

At that moment, Peter, who was always impulsive, drew his sword and struck a servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. Jesus immediately stopped Peter and ordered him to put away his sword. He said, "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" *Drinking the cup* was an expression for undergoing the most bitter suffering and eternal death on the cross. Jesus was determined to drink the cup of suffering and death on the cross. He was determined to lay down his life for his sheep. He was determined to offer himself to die voluntarily and Peter's defence with a sword was at variance with his determination! Later in John 18:36, Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is of another place." Jesus made it very clear to the governments of this world that his kingship does not come through holy wars or unholy wars. According to Matthew 26:53, Jesus said, that if he wanted to, he could mobilise 72 thousand of angels (a legion is 6000) to defend him. In Isaiah 37:36 just *one angel* put to death a whole army of 185 000 soldiers! Jesus did not believe in holy religious war and warned, "All who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Mt 26:52).

Jesus Christ was not merely the victim of evil people. He was the King of kings and in complete control of whatever happened on earth. Jesus Christ was not merely murdered. He deliberately and voluntarily gave his life as a ransom to redeem very many people in the history of this world. He gave his life to be punished for the sins of every human being that believes in him!

I am deeply impressed that Jesus Christ gave himself voluntarily to die for my sins. And I am convinced that Jesus Christ is also in complete control of whatever happens to me in my life.

(T) An important truth for me is about Peter's denial.

Peter did not really know himself. The day before Jesus was crucified, he made a big statement. He said to Jesus, "I am ready to go with you to prison and to death" and "I will lay down my life for you" (Luke 22:33, John 13:37). But that same night when Jesus was arrested Peter deserted Jesus and fled together with the other disciples (Mark 14:50).

As the soldiers took Jesus to be tried by the Sanhedrin and the high priest, Peter followed at a distance and entered the courtyard of the high priest. Three times people recognised him as one of Jesus' disciples and three times Peter denied that he knew Jesus! After the last denial, the rooster crowed for the second time and Jesus turned around and looked straight at Peter. Peter went outside and wept bitterly (Luke 22:61-62).

Peter did not want to do this, but he did not realise that he too *had feelings of fear*. He did not realise that *in his own power* he could not keep his big promise. Only the realisation of his own emptiness, prepared him to later receive the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

I also thought about myself. Which big promises have I made to God? Which big aspirations have I had with regard to God's kingdom? Do I really know myself? Do I realise just how weak I am? Am I willing to tell this to Jesus Christ? I know that if I only rely on my own power I can also deny Jesus. So I prayed for his grace and the power of his Holy Spirit, that I would not deny him, but instead confess him at all times and under all circumstances.

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION.**

Let us try to understand all the truths in John chapter 18 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (18:12-24). How many trials did Jesus have before the Jewish and the Roman authorities?

(T) The four accounts in the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the accounts of eye-witnesses. By comparing the accounts in the four Gospels, we get a clear picture of the events during his trial, death and resurrection. After his arrest by the soldiers, temple-police and Sanhedrin officials, Jesus was bound like a criminal. Jesus Christ came into the world to bring freedom from the guilt, shame and power of sin. He was *bound*, so that everyone who believes in him may be *set free* from their sins! He faced three trials by the Jewish authorities and three trials by the Roman authorities. His three trials before the Jewish authorities were the trial before Annas, the trial before Caiaphas and the trial before the official Sanhedrin. His three trials before the Roman authorities were the trial before Pilate, the trial before Herod and the resumed trial before Pilate.

2nd Question. What happened at the preliminary trial of Jesus before Annas (Jn 18:12-14,19-24).

(S) This trial took place while Peter was in the court of the high priest denying Jesus Christ (Jn 18:15-18). In John 18:19, Annas is called "the high priest" even although his son-in-law, Caiaphas, was the real high priest (13,24). Annas and Caiaphas probably lived in two different flanks of the same large house of the high priest, which consisted of a building with many rooms surrounding a courtyard in the middle. This Annas was a very influential man. He himself had been the high priest from 6-15 A.D. Although he was deposed, he remained the dominant member of the Sanhedrin, which controlled all Jewish affairs. He managed to get his son-in-law, Caiaphas, as well as five of his own sons and a grandson to be appointed high priest! Although he was not officially the high priest himself, everybody still called him a "high priest" (Lk 3:2; Act 4:6). He might not preside over the Sanhedrin, but he was surely the man to consult! He was the man largely responsible for the actions of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Other historical sources describe him as a proud, exceedingly ambitious and very wealthy man. His family was notorious for its greed. The main source of his wealth came from receiving a good share of the profits made by selling sacrificial animals in the temple court. He was responsible for turning the house of prayer into "a den of robbers" (Jn 2:14). He may have been the instigator behind the plot to kill Jesus. Anyway, his son-in-law, Caiaphas propagated that it would be good for Israel if Jesus was killed.

Annas questioned Jesus first about his disciples and then about his teaching. He was more interested in *the success* of Jesus than in *the truth*. Jesus declined to be a witness against himself and demanded that Annas produce honest witnesses as the Old Testament law required. Jesus said that he had always spoken openly and everybody had been

welcome to hear his teachings. This stood in stark contrast to the secret plotting by the Sanhedrin! When he was struck, he demanded that they testify as to what he had done wrong. No one could mention one thing that he had done wrong. No incriminating evidence was produced at this preliminary hearing. Jesus was *completely innocent*! Then Annas sent Jesus across the courtyard to his son Caiaphas.

3rd Question. What happened at the trial of Jesus before Caiaphas?

(T) This trial is described in Matthew 26:57-68 and Mark 14:53-65 and also took place in the high priest's house (Lk 22:54). All the Jewish political leaders, the elders, and all the Jewish religious leaders, the priests and theological scribes, were looking for false evidence against Jesus, so that they would have a reason to put him to death. Jesus remained silent against all false accusations! When they asked him whether he was the expected Messiah, the Son of God, he affirmed it and said that at his second coming, all people would see him sitting at the right hand of the Almighty God (Mt 26:63-64). Caiaphas and all the chief priests, elders and scribes could not find any incriminating evidence against Jesus. Jesus was *completely innocent*! Nevertheless, they accused him of blasphemy, spat in his face and struck him with their fists!

This trial must have ended about 3 a.m. in the morning, when the rooster crowed. Meanwhile, the men, who guarded Jesus, mocked and insulted him and beat him (Lk 22:63-65). Jesus was kept imprisoned in the high priest's house until early morning.

4th Question. What happened at the trial of Jesus before the official Sanhedrin?

(S) This trial is described in Luke 22:66-71, Matthew 27:1 and Mark 15:1 and took place just after day-break (Lk 22:66). The official Sanhedrin council with Caiaphas presiding convened a hurried meeting to ratify their official decision that Jesus was guilty of the death sentence. They wanted everything to be over before the multitudes in Jerusalem would become aware of what was happening and before the Sabbath started that evening. They wanted to give a semblance of legality to the corrupt proceedings that had marked the night-session. Again Jesus admitted that he was the expected Messiah, that he would soon be seated at the right hand of the Almighty God and that he was the Son of God. Also the official Sanhedrin council could not find any incriminating evidence against Jesus. Jesus was *completely innocent*! Although the Sanhedrin had the right to pronounce the death penalty, they had no right to execute the death penalty. Therefore they took Jesus to the Roman governor, Pilate.

5th Question. Were the trials of Jesus before the Jewish religious authorities fair?

(T) No, these trials before the Jewish religious and political authorities were not fair. John 11:49-50 relates that it had been decided long ago that Jesus must be put to death. The Jewish leaders were envious of the fact that they were losing their hold upon the Jewish nation. They were angry that Jesus had exposed them and denounced them publicly. Therefore, this was not a fair trial, but an evil plot. *The Jewish leaders* devised this evil plot and they saw to it that it was carried out. *They* sent their officials to arrest Jesus. *They* brought all the false witnesses. *They* condemned him although he was completely innocent. *They* delivered him over to the Roman governor. *They* stirred up the whole crowd to choose Barabbas and have Jesus crucified. *They* mocked Jesus Christ. *They* spread lies about his resurrection. And the book of Acts relates how *they* continued to persecute Christians. This envy and anger of *the Jewish authorities* at the time of Jesus does not make Jewish people in general worse sinners than anybody else! Remember, the Gentile Romans tried him equally unfair and crucified him. That is why the Bible says that all people in the world have sinned!

6th Question. What happened at the trial of Jesus before the Roman governor Pilate?

(S) Pilate was a proud man (Jn 19:10), cruel (Lk 13:1), superstitious (Jn 19:8) and a self-seeker, who was afraid to lose his good standing with the Roman emperor. He was very afraid that the Jews would use their influence to remove him from office. During the trial, everything points in the direction that he wanted to get rid of this case.

When Pilate asked what the charges were the Jewish leaders said that the only reason they brought Jesus before Pilate was because Jesus was *a criminal* (18:30). This was a veiled threat to Pilate not to give a different verdict than the Jews. When Pilate said that the Jews were allowed to judge Jesus according to their own law, the Jewish leaders showed that they were determined to kill Jesus (18:31). From Luke 23:2 it appears that when Pilate refused to sentence Jesus without due process of law, the Jewish leaders accused Jesus of three things. The Jews said that Jesus perverted and subverted the Jewish nation; that he forbade the Jews to pay taxes (tribute) to the Roman government; and that he claimed to be a king in opposition to the Roman Caesar. Thus the Jews charged Jesus with being a politically dangerous individual!

When Pilate took Jesus inside and privately examined him, Jesus explained to him that he was a king, but not like the kings in the world. He said that he came from heaven not to fight against nations for political power. But that he came to testify for the *truth* and destroy the realm of *lies*. Jesus even gently invited the governor, Pilate, to come to the side of truth. He said, "Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

When Pilate came out to the crowd standing outside, he pronounced that Jesus was *completely innocent*! He said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.” If Pilate had been an honest and fair man, he would have released Jesus at this point. Luke 23:5 tells how the Jewish leaders immediately accused Jesus of continuously stirring people up all over Judea and in Galilee. Although Pilate had full jurisdiction over Judea, he sent Jesus to king Herod, who had jurisdiction over Galilee.

7th Question. What happened at the trial of Jesus before king Herod?

(T) This trial is only recorded in Luke 23:6-12. Although the Jewish leaders vehemently accused Jesus, and Herod asked him many questions, Jesus did not give him one answer! Because also Herod could not find any cause of indictment, he mocked Jesus and then returned him to Pilate.

8th Question. What happened at the resumed trial of Jesus before Pilate?

(S) Luke 23:13-25 tells how Pilate called together the Jewish leaders and said to them that he had examined Jesus in their presence, but neither he nor king Herod had found any basis for their charges against Jesus. Pilate feared to hand Jesus over for crucifixion, but he also feared an uprising from the Jews. Matthew 27:15-26 says that the crowd demanded that Pilate showed his usual favour during the Passover by releasing a prisoner. Pilate let them choose between Jesus, the king of the Jews, and Barabbas, a rebel and murderer. He expected the crowd to choose Jesus. At that critical moment, a messenger arrived to inform Pilate about a dream which had caused intense suffering to his wife. It was then that the Jewish leaders stirred up the whole crowd to demand the release of Barabbas and to have Jesus crucified. Pilate still maintained that Jesus was *completely innocent*, but out of fear for his own position, he had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified.

(T) **STEP 4 and 5. APPLY and PRAY.**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application God wants you to turn into a *personal application*. Then take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in John chapter 18.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK.**

First. Make a commitment to do Bible study every week. Prepare next week’s Bible study. Use “the five steps” method to prepare John chapter 19.

Second. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks “Go and build Christ’s Church” and Internet on www.dota.net.

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.