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“Why Do You Question Me?”

JOHN 18:12-27

Introduction

1. Last week we looked at our Lord’s betrayal and arrest in the garden.
2. Tonight, I would like for us to look at two things which John weaves together in His gospel — our Lord’s interrogation before the high priest, Annas, and Peter’s denials of Jesus.
3. Because we have much to cover I want to jump right in, so please turn with me to John 18:12.

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I. Peter’s First Denial of Jesus (vv. 15-18)

A. JESUS IS BROUGHT BEFORE ANNAS (VV. 12-14)

“So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.” (John 18:12–14, NASB95)

1. John reminds us of those who were involved in Jesus’ arrest in the garden that night (cf. John 18:3).
 - a. “The Roman cohort and the commander”
 - 1) These were a part of the Roman auxiliary troops brought to Jerusalem to keep peace during Passover.
 - 2) As we learned last week, a cohort (*speiran*) could have numbered as many as 1,000, or as few as 200 men, with their commander.

- b. "The officers of the Jews"
 - 1) These were the "temple police" who were under the authority of the chief priests and had the responsibility of keeping peace within the temple precinct.
 - 2) It is clear that these men were the primary arresting officers because Jesus was taken to Annas, and then to Caiaphas, rather than to Pilate.
- 2. John is the only one of the gospel writers who tells us that Jesus was brought first to Annas.
 - a. Annas held the office of high priest from A.D. 6 to A.D. 15 when he was deposed by the governor who preceded Pilate, Valerius Gratus.
 - b. Under O.T. law the appointment to the office of high priest was for life.
 - c. However, because the Romans did not like the concentration of power in one person, they frequently changed high priests.
 - d. Annas continued to hold enormous influence for two reasons:
 - 1) Many of the Jews still considered him the real high priest.
 - 2) No fewer than five of his sons, and his son-in-law Caiaphas, held the office at one time or another.
 - e. In his gospel, Luke tells us that the ministry of John the Baptist began during "the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas" (Luke 3:2; cf. Acts 4:6).
- 3. John also reminds us that earlier that year it was Caiaphas who "had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people." (John 18:14, cf. 11:50)

Slide 3**B. PETER'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE SLAVE-GIRL (VV. 15-18)**

"Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought

Peter in. Then the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, “You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.” Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself.” (John 18:15–18, NASB95)

1. John now transitions from the events taking place inside to what is happening outside in the courtyard connecting the residence of Annas with that of Caiaphas.
2. Peter and another disciple whom John does not name were following Jesus and the arresting party from a distance.
3. John seems to be the most logical choice for the other disciple.
4. John tells us that this other disciple “was known to the high priest” and that he had “entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest” (v. 15).
5. When he saw Peter “standing at the door outside,” he “went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in” (v. 16).

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6. The door-keeper happened to be a “slave (servant) girl” of the high priest.
7. She asked Peter a rhetorical question, “You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?” (v. 17).
8. Earlier that evening, John records Peter as having said to Jesus, “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You” (John 13:37).
9. After Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him three times before a rooster crows, Matthew and Mark record Peter as saying to Jesus, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You” (Matthew 16:35; Mark 14:31).
10. However, when this young woman said to him, “You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?”, Peter responds by saying, “I am not.”
11. Denial number one. Don’t be too quick to condemn Peter. I will tell you why later.

12. Because it was cold that night, “the slaves and the officers” had made themselves “a charcoal fire” and were warming themselves by it.
13. Peter went over and stood by them, “warming himself” (v. 18).

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II. Jesus’ Interrogation Before Annas (vv. 19-24)

A. QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS DISCIPLES AND HIS TEACHING (VV. 19-20)

“The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. Jesus answered him, “I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret.” (John 18:19–20, NASB95)

1. Meanwhile, back inside, Annas was questioning Jesus about two matters:
 - a. “His disciples” — Possibly, how many were following Him and was there the potential for any possible conspiracy.
 - b. “His teaching” — Jesus claim as to who he was (19:7) and their fear that He was leading the people astray, into apostasy (cf. 7:12).

“The Jews answered him (Pilate), “We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.”” (John 19:7, NASB95)

“There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, “He is a good man”; others were saying, “No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray.”” (John 7:12, NASB95)

2. As Matthew tells us in his gospel account, when the Jewish religious leaders bring Jesus before them, it was obvious to him that the real issue behind the trial of Jesus was their envy (Matthew 27:18).

“For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over.” (Matthew 27:18, NASB95)

3. They were jealous of Jesus' prestige, popularity and power.
4. Annas cared more about his own power and position over the people and was fearful that Jesus was allowed to live, it would slip away from him.
5. Jesus said nothing about His disciples, perhaps to protect them.
6. There was no need to question Him concerning His teaching, because He Had spoken nothing in secret.
 - a. "I have spoken openly to the world"
 - b. "I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together"
7. Thousands of people had heard His teaching. Any of them could be asked about what He had taught.
8. This hearing was illegal because, according to Old Testament law Jesus was to be considered absolutely innocent until the evidence of two or three witnesses had been stated and confirmed.
9. This is the point of what Jesus is saying.

Slide 6**B. JESUS CHALLENGES THE LEGALITY OF HIS INTERROGATION (VV. 21-24)**

"Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said." When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest." (**John 18:21-24, NASB95**)

1. Under Old Testament law as under our own system of justice, no one can be compelled to testify against himself.
2. Annas was seeking to compel Jesus to testify against Himself.
3. Jesus rightly refused to respond to this kind of questioning.
4. One of the officers standing nearby took offense at Jesus' challenge to the high priest and slapped Him on the face.

5. However, Jesus does not back down.
6. He tells Annas if His response was illegal or inappropriate, then file the appropriate contempt of court charges: "testify of the wrong."
7. However, if He spoke the truth, especially in His challenge of an illegal form of interrogation, then why the assault?
8. Through His response, Jesus is asking for a fair trial.
9. His opponents, on the other hand, because they are unable to win their case by fair means, are content to pursue unjust means.
10. Realizing that he isn't going to get anywhere with Jesus, Annas has Jesus bound and sent to Caiaphas.
11. If Jesus is to be brought before Pilate, the legal accusation must be brought by the one whom Pilate recognizes as the official high priest.

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III. Peter's Second and Third Denials of Jesus (vv. 25-27)

A. HIS RESPONSE TO THOSE STANDING AROUND THE FIRE (v. 25)

"Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it, and said, "I am not."" (John 18:25, NASB95)

1. John now takes us back outside where Peter is warming himself by the charcoal fire.
2. The reason John does this is to make the contrast between Jesus' replies to His accusers and Peter's denials stand out.
3. As R.E. Brown says in his commentary on this passage:
 - a. "Jesus stands up to His questioners and denies nothing."
 - b. "Peter cowers before his questioners and denies everything."¹
4. As Peter warms himself by the fire, one of those standing there with him

¹ R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, volume 2, (Geoffrey Chapman/Doubleday, 1966-71), p. 842.

asks him the same question the slave girl had asked earlier, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" (v. 25).

5. Like the slave girl, they knew that John was one of Jesus' disciples.
6. Now they question whether Peter is also one.
7. His response. The same as before, "I am not."
8. Denial number two.

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B. HIS RESPONSE TO ONE OF THE HIGH PRIEST'S SLAVES (v. 26-27)

"One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed." (John 18:26-27, NASB95)

1. John tells us the third person to challenge Peter is not only "one of the slaves of the high priest," but also "a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off."
2. This lets us know that John had detailed knowledge of the high priest's household.
3. Perhaps with the light of the full moon and the fire this person was able to see the features of Peter's face was a little more clearly.
4. Having been in the garden that night when Jesus was arrested and having witnessed the attack on Malchus, he thought he recognized Peter.
5. So he asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"
6. For the third time, Peter denied being with Jesus. "Immediately, a rooster crowed" (v. 27).

Conclusion

1. There are two things which John does not tell us in his account:
 - a. According to Luke's gospel, this last denial happened at the exact moment

Jesus was being led across the courtyard from the residence of Annas to that of Caiaphas.

- b. Peter had no sooner gotten the words of denial out of his mouth than the rooster crowed.
 - c. It was at this time that Jesus turned and looked at Peter, and Peter remembered what Jesus had said, “Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times” (Luke 22:61).
 - d. The second detail which both Matthew & Luke reveal to us is that Peter, “went out and wept bitterly” (Matthew 26:75; Luke 22:62).
2. Before we condemn Peter, let us remember that Peter was the one who . . .
 - a. Protested his loyalty to Jesus in the upper room earlier that evening.
 - b. Was the only one who sought to defend his Lord in the garden.
 - c. Followed Jesus back to Jerusalem and waited outside.
 3. Might I suggest to you that Peter did what each of us might do if placed in the same circumstances — we would give way under the pressure.
 4. Thankfully, Jesus saw what Peter could and would become — a staunch proclaimer of the faith.
 5. He does the same with each of us — He sees what we want to become and can become through His grace.
 6. People . . .
 - a. who love Him and want to follow Him
 - b. who want to be faithful
 - c. who want to make a difference in the lives of those around us
 - d. who want to be with Him always