



Not of this World

John 18

18:1-11 – How did Peter try to get in the way of God’s plan and how may we avoid doing that ourselves?

God’s way is always superior to our way. John 18:1-11 tells the story of the religious leaders and their soldiers coming to arrest Jesus to execute Him. Trying to protect Jesus, Peter pulled a sword and wounded the high priest’s servant. But Jesus healed the servant and rebuked Peter telling him to let God’s plan unfold. We are often tempted to take matters into our own hands thinking God has left things up to us to resolve. But when we take actions without considering God, this is sin because it opposes Him. If Peter had his way, Jesus would not have gone to the cross, so then there’d be no forgiveness of sins. We can avoid making bad decisions and their resulting consequences when we trust God to work out His plan.

18:15-18 – How did Peter fail Jesus and how may we avoid doing that ourselves?

We fail Jesus when we pass on opportunities to speak up for Him. John 18:15-18 describes the first of three times that Peter denied following Jesus. Times of doubt and challenge should be met with honest estimates of our own strength. When we don’t admit our weaknesses and fears, we keep ourselves from seeking God’s help. Peter and the other disciples had slept in the Garden of Gethsemane when they should have been praying as Jesus had requested. This caused the disciples to be out of sync with Christ; attacking when they should have been still; then running when they should have stood their ground. In order to avoid missing out on opportunities to speak up for Jesus, prayer needs to be a key part of our lives.

18:25-26 – Why do Christians remain secretive about their faith and what can we do about this?

Have you denied following Christ? We all need God’s help to speak up for Him when given an opportunity. In John 18:25-26, Peter denied being a follower of Jesus for the second and third times. We have all experienced occasions when we should have said something revealing we follow Jesus but didn’t out of fear. Peter was prone to getting things done in his own power but learned that spiritual warfare requires God’s help in order to prevail. We too need to have no illusions about our situation our life in a world that opposes God even if that hostility is very subtle. So be ready to praise Jesus and pray for God’s help to take full advantage of the opportunities He gives us to speak up for Him.

18:25-26 – How does Jesus dying by crucifixion show that God is in control?

Knowing that God has arranged for us to do the work we have makes any job more significant. The fact that Christ died by crucifixion reveals that God is in control. The whole world shared the responsibility for Christ’s death because John 18:25-26 says that a conspiracy of the Jews and Gentiles were required for Jesus to be crucified. Christ dying by crucifixion fulfills multiple prophecies of how the Messiah would die. It actualized the Old Testament type of the serpent lifted on a pole as a sign of salvation per John 3:14. And the cross also fulfilled God’s command to be hanged from a tree in judgment for sin per Deuteronomy 21:22. As God orchestrated events so Jesus could fulfill His mission, He has equipped us and given us the opportunity to serve His purpose.

18:36 – Why does being a citizen of Christ’s kingdom change us?

In John 18:36 Jesus said, “*My kingdom is not of this world*” (NIV). Jesus’ reign is beyond the limitations of this world. The goals, principles, and methods of Christ’s kingdom come from heaven. They are not the invention of evolving people or even of prophets and wise men. The way the kingdom affects our lives demonstrates that it is not rooted in this world. For instance, citizens of the kingdom are motivated to do excellent work whether the boss is watching or not because they know that Jesus is. Jesus’ kingship requires, not a choice of options for action, but real obedience to a wise Savior-King. And this changes the lives of all who follow the King.

18:37 – How may we use the culture war to attract people to Jesus?

The striking contrast of world views will fascinate some of our associates. The Lord can use this to extend His kingdom. The culture war between those who stand for truth and those who deny the truth of God is heating up in our day. The selfish perspectives of truth deniers cause their views on the issues of our day to stand in stark contrast to those who recognize that Jesus is Lord. Many of our associates will be fascinated by these differences and some will be attracted to the beauty and logic of the truth about Christ. Jesus said in John 18:37, “*Everyone on the side of truth listens to me*” (NIV). We should study God’s Word to be ready to share its truths with our associates who are open to it. Some of these will be eternally grateful.

18:39 – Why did Pilate give the crowd a choice about what he should do about Jesus?

All people must make a personal choice about Jesus. When we encounter associates who are undecided about Jesus, it may help to tell them about the Roman Governor, Pilate. Pilate tried to put the responsibility of dealing with Jesus on others in John 18:31; he tried to find a way he could release Jesus in John 18:39; he tried to compromise by having Jesus flogged rather than handing him over to die in John 19:1-3; and in John 19:15 he tried appealing to the sympathy of Jesus' accusers. Everyone has to decide what to do with Jesus. Whatever desire Pilate had to free Jesus was trumped by his refusal to do so. Pilate let everyone else decide for him and in the end, he lost. So encourage your wavering associates to decide for themselves about Jesus.

18:40 – What does Barabbas being set free tell us about our own salvation?

All people have a need to appreciate what Jesus did for us. When we encounter associates who do not grasp the significance of what Jesus did for us, it may help to tell them about Barabbas. In John 18:40 the people demanded that the Romans crucify Jesus in place of the criminal Barabbas. Jesus died in his place, so Barabbas was set free. We too are sinners or criminals who have broken God's holy law and thus deserve to die. But Jesus died in our place setting us free from the eternal consequence of sin. As all Barabbas could do is accept his gift of freedom, all we can do is accept the gift of God which is eternal life. God did all the work enabling us to have eternal life; all we do is respond to what God has done.