

## Gospel of John - episode 38

### Chapter 18 part 2

Welcome to our sharing on John's Gospel. I'm going to comment on one verse in chapter 18. "The cohort and its captain and the Jewish guards seized Jesus and bound him". Now, most people continue reading because they do not understand the significance of **the binding and the unbinding of the Son of Man**. The binding is the Passion. The unbinding is the Resurrection. It is possible to explain the entire mystery by the binding and unbinding of the Son of Man. I want to look at this so that if you see the binding of the Son of Man and appreciate the way John describes the unbinding of the Son of Man in the Resurrection. This is extremely important. I told you in the last episode that **Jesus had now let himself fall into the hands of sinners**, which is the worst possible thing you could do because human beings don't have mercy on any victim they capture. Man's inhumanity to man is one of the greatest mysteries for me.

Jesus descended from the heavens, from above, from God's realm, and came down to earth in the Incarnation. In God's realm, everything is Light, Life, liberty, love and unity. Then he came down to the earth and found humanity in spiritual captivity. What did he want to do? His decision was to unbind the human race. Look at a closed zip. It's a good image. Jesus wants to unzip humanity completely. Look back briefly at his ministry - not just in John's Gospel, but also as described in the other Gospels - you find that Jesus came to bring heaven down upon the earth. He couldn't set up the Kingdom of God if we were all bound up in sin, unbelief, darkness and all the consequences of that. During his ministry Jesus unbound sinners from their sin through forgiveness; he unbound the lepers from their leprosy. He unbound the blind from their blindness, and unbound the deaf from their deafness. He unbound the sick from their sickness, and the ignorant from their lack of knowledge of God's Word. In this way he offered humanity freedom.

Now, when we get to the cross, we will see Jesus blinded with blood, sweat, and tears. Leprosy means having wounds all over your body. On the cross, we will see Jesus, the leper, wounded from head to foot. Jesus unbound our deafness so that we could hear the Word of God. On the cross, he is deafened by insults, anger, and hatred thrown at him. On the cross he is dying, and **he does die!** He took our sicknesses, sins and weaknesses to the cross. It is there, on the cross that the unbinding of the human race begins. Jesus is surrounded by people who have no compassion or understanding. You can only give what you have. Human beings do give what they have.

If we have anger or hatred we give it, so, what happens to Jesus in the Passion is that, first of all, he is bound with ropes never to be a free man again. Secondly, he is bound with chains and ropes when they put him in prison. Thirdly, they try to bind him emotionally by an unjust trial giving him no chance to defend himself, and they try to bind him with torture. Now, torture usually gets people. Not only that, we bound him with nails to a cross so that he was physically unable to move. Even more that, we bound him to a tomb, and the tomb was sealed in case he would ever get out of it! That's binding, binding, binding! That's the Passion. Once you appreciate that you will understand the Resurrection when he breaks out of the binding of the tomb; and out of the binding of the darkness. He breaks out of all the woundedness he suffered and returns completely whole, alive, and incredibly wonderful. So, the binding and the unbinding of the Son of Man is an extremely important way of understanding what happens.

John prepared us for this in the unbinding of Lazarus in chapter 11. Lazarus died of a wasting illness, so his body was disintegrating even before he died. He was four days in a tomb, wrapped in cloths from head to foot. Jesus called him out of the darkness of death, out of the darkness of the tomb, and he asked those who were standing there to unbind him and let him go free. So, the way John described that was a good preparation for the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

The Old Testament also prepared for this. John has the ability to bring the Old Testament into his text without actually naming it. He presumes that those reading the Gospel know the Old Testament because it was the only Bible his congregation had, and they would have known the scriptures well. Therefore, they all knew the story of Abraham and Isaac. It was the binding and the unbinding of Isaac that opened everybody up to understand the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. Let us go back just for a moment to Genesis 22. There we have an extraordinary event where Abraham represents God, the Father, prophetically, and Isaac represents God, the Son, incarnate, prophetically. Abraham knows he must bring his son to a special mount in Jerusalem called Mount Moriah. There he is to sacrifice his Beloved Son to God in perfect obedience.

I have shown you in all the preparation from Chapter 13 until now that the issue for Jesus as the Beloved Son is perfect obedience to the Father. "I want the world to know that I love the Father, and therefore I do exactly what my Father tells me": John 14:30-31. So, the issue is sacrifice out of obedience to the Will of God. This makes the binding of Isaac extremely important. We know from Genesis that all the future promises of Abraham being the father of a great multitude of peoples, that Kings would come out of him, and prophets, and saints, **was all bound up in this one child** because he only had Isaac. Isaac was the only one that accepted his inheritance. Ishmael had gone back into paganism.

So, Isaac carried all the promises of God in himself. How could Abraham come and bind his own son on the altar of sacrifice out of obedience to God? It was so impressive that scripture says that God accepted this as the reason for justifying him. Now, why would he do it? The letter to the Hebrews chapter 11:19 comments on this story. The author says that Abraham took his son, Isaac, to the altar at Mount Moriah, which is about one-third of a mile in the air from Calvary. There was 2,000 years in the distance in time. Hebrews 11 says, "Abraham reasoned". You see, God expects us to use our intelligence in responding to him. "Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead because God is the Creator". God is omnipotent. There is nothing impossible with God. It's extremely important for us to remember that there is nothing impossible with God, not even that you and I would become a saint! "And figuratively speaking, he did raise Isaac from the dead". He did bring Isaac from the dead because he was bound to the altar of sacrifice, his father had taken the knife to pierce his son. It was at that moment God knew Abraham had given him the perfect act of obedience.

The unbinding of Isaac is extremely important because it means that this boy - who carries all the promises of God in his own person - is the one to bring new life to the earth. He is the one that God will use to fulfil all the promises that he made to his father, Abraham. The ram that was pointed out to Abraham to offer to God in place of his son is also extremely important because that ram figuratively **represented the Lamb of God** that John the Baptist pointed out in chapter 1:29, "there is the Lamb of God. There is the one who will take away the sin of the world". That ram 2,000 years before Calvary pointed to Jesus, **the one who is going to be sacrificed now** to save the world.

John wants to make sure that we all know that Jesus was captured and executed by both the Roman and Jewish authorities so that they are both responsible for his death. Why is John emphasising that? He wants to show you now that Jesus will be arraigned before the Jewish Council, that's the Sanhedrin, and before Herod. (John won't talk about Herod. Go to Luke for that), and before emperors, that is before Pilate, just as he had foretold. So, in Luke 21:12, Jesus said, "they will lay hands on you (this is the binding); and they will persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and emperors". What Jesus prophesied in these events happens to himself first. We will see this in the Passion. John shows in detail that this is what happens to Jesus. Jesus also told his disciples what they were to do. Luke 22:13-19 tells us clearly that **we are to bear witness before these councils. This is our public witness to Christ.**

As we go through the various scenes of the Passion in the next couple of episodes, we will see Jesus bearing witness before all the people who persecute him. He does it calmly and quietly; he is not disturbed. It doesn't matter what they do **he remains true to himself** and **true to his**

**testimony.** This is our model, the template for the church when she is brought before councils also. Let us begin by looking at the first council that Jesus will be brought to. John 18:13. "They took him first to Annas, because he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest of that year". I want to emphasise something: it just so happened that Caiaphas was the high priest of that year, it just as it just so happened that Pilate was the governor at the time, and it just so happened that this particular Passover was falling on a Sabbath, making it the most sacred Sabbath and the most sacred Passover that Israel could have.

While this earth-shaking event happens, these men happened to just be in authority. It's amazing the roles they played. It was Caiaphas who suggested to the Jews that it was better for one man to die for the people. Now, the first thing we have to say here is that John does not give us the trial before Caiaphas. You have to go back to the Synoptic Gospels for that. Legally, we would call what we deal with here as an interrogation or a legal hearing. Just as the time that you and I are living in this year, at this moment, it just so happens that there are two popes reigning in the church. Very unusual. When Jesus was brought to trial in Israel, it just so happened that there were two high priests reigning in Jerusalem! That's something you need to notice. That tells you there's something special about our time - but that's not for John's Gospel! The phenomenon of two high priests was there. It was against the Mosaic law to have two high priests!

Let us look at the house of Annas. He had been the high priest and because of all the corruption of the house of Annas and the fact that the Pilate hated the Jews, he deposed Annas. But the Jewish authorities would not accept political interference in religious matters, so Annas produced four high priests from his sons. He had a daughter also who couldn't be a priest simply because she was a woman, so he accepted her husband, Caiaphas, his son-in-law. And it just so happened that he was high priest when Jesus was arraigned before the Sanhedrin. As John says here, it just so happened that he was the one who prophesied that it was better for one to die for the people! Now, the house of Annas was like a dynasty which ruled the land. Unfortunately, this family was not known for holiness. It was known for greed, corruption, wealth and power. Annas had been high priest from 6-16 AD but he still wielded a lot of power, so much so that when it came to the Passion of Jesus, Jesus had to be brought before Annas first.

It would not have been tolerated if he was brought before Annas' son-in-law first, even though anything that happened with Annas could not be legal. Decisions were legal if the reigning high priest is present, and for that year, it was Caiaphas. When Jesus was dragged before Annas, there were two significant Apostles present, Peter and John. Peter really loved Jesus, but he is still acting on the worldly level. He has to really disgrace himself before he recovers. Peter has to die to the old Simon bar Jonah, which hasn't happened yet. John is there as a silent witness.

These two, once you come to the Passion and Resurrection are always put together. I will show you the significance of that when we come to the Resurrection. I can't give it now because Peter has not yet died and been reborn. John is allowed into the presence of the Council for perfectly ordinary reasons. His father Zebedee from Capernaum supplied fish to the house of Annas. Therefore, John would have been the messenger taking the fish before he became a disciple of Jesus. So, Annas knew John personally and he was allowed to go in. Peter, of course, cannot do that. I will pick up the story of how Peter got in to the presence of the Council in our next episode. It's a pity he got in.

Thank you for listening. God bless you.

### **INTERVAL**

Welcome to our sharing on John's Gospel. We continue with the drama in chapter 18, and we are looking at Jesus being arraigned before Annas, the high priest. Let's begin with some reading. This is 18:15. "Simon Peter, with another disciple, followed Jesus. The disciple who was known to the high priest went with Jesus into the high priest's palace. (Notice the term palace). Peter stayed outside the door. So, the other disciple, the one known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who was keeping the door, and brought Peter in. The maid on duty at the door said to Peter, Aren't you one of this man's disciples? He answered, I'm not. Now it was cold, and the servants and the guards had lit a charcoal fire, and they were standing there warming themselves. So, Peter stood there, too, warming himself with the others".

Peter, as an unknown layman, had been brought in as far as the courtyard, not inside where John was. So here we have one of the dramatic incidents at the beginning of the Passion of Jesus concerning Simon Peter. The Synoptic Gospels give greater detail, but we'll stay with the way John is doing it. Notice that John won't name himself, (the other disciple). We know who that 'other' disciple is. It's John. Peter stayed in the courtyard since he is completely unknown to the chief priests. But of course, they will get to know him very well after the Resurrection, when he himself has to bear witness before this same group of men that Jesus bore witness to. At this particular moment, however, that thought would be incomprehensible to Peter. He has to stay out in the courtyard where the attendants and the guards are, whereas the important people go in to where Jesus is.

I showed you when we were doing the farewell discourse that Peter wants to be with Jesus but he has to learn what way you are to be with Jesus. The physical way he is with Jesus now is wrong because he is operating on the level of below while Jesus operates on the level of above. Here we have the two-stage drama that I mentioned in the introduction. Peter is in the

foreground with Jesus in the background with the high priest and the important people inside. Just as Jesus is being interrogated about his disciples, his main disciple, his chief witness, denies him. That's what John wants you to hear. The master is inside; Peter has already been asked, 'Aren't you one of these?' And he denies it. So, 18:20 says that "the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching". Poor Jesus, while he is being questioned about his ministry, hears Peter denying that he ever knew him! It must have been a dreadful stab in the heart for one who loved as much as Jesus loved. Peter should have left the Garden of Gethsemane to hide during this whole process; he wouldn't have had this humiliating fall. But unfortunately, acting on the wrong level, he cannot bear witness to Jesus. As Jesus is questioned by the high priest and the important members of the Sanhedrin, Peter has the opportunity as the chief among the disciples, to stand up and testify for his master, but he does the exact opposite!

One of the things John shows very delicately - you might not even notice it unless you stop long enough at each word - is that **Jesus remains completely silent about his disciples**. He only answers about himself. He continues to protect them. St. Luke shows that Jesus was very anxious about Peter making a fool of himself, so he tried to get his attention. When the cock crew of course, Peter realised what Jesus said to him a little earlier. Here Jesus is in the background remaining silent out pure love, but also concern for his disciples. What he says about his own teaching is this. "I have spoken openly for all the world to hear. I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple where the Jews (that is the Jewish people) meet" because they met every sabbath in the synagogues. They went to the temple to be taught by the rabbis, and also for their feasts.

So, "I've spoken openly. I have said nothing in secret. Why are you asking me? He said, Ask my hearers what I taught. They know what I said". Jesus will receive abuse for that answer, but let's look at it first. Jesus is being interrogated about his disciples and about his teaching. Peter, who is his chief disciple, is also being interrogated. Jesus is questioned by the high priest, the highest authority in the land. Peter is questioned just by a bystander, someone near him, nobody of authority. Jesus affirmed who he was. Peter denied everything. He not only denied that he was a disciple, he denied that he ever knew the man.

Remember that this is the night when people stumble - as I've told you before. Jesus acknowledges **that he is the I AM** in front of anybody. He has no fear of anyone. Peter's reaction is, **I am not; I'm not a disciple; I'm not a believer; I'm not even a friend, not even an acquaintance**. It's horrifying. At least John's silence is decent. There is dignity in it. John, by not opening his mouth, was able to be a witness to these events and to be able to pass on this information to future generations. Peter, by stumbling and saying all the wrong things must



leave, so he can't be a witness to these events. He doesn't hear the interrogation of Jesus or his responses. So, Peter is not a witness here. It's really sad. Fear under pressure makes us useless as witnesses also.

Jesus received unnecessary abuse for his reply. The reason for that is Annas' presence; he is the great high priest. He is the representative of God to the Jewish people. Those present see Jesus as a poor Galilean workman who thinks he's a prophet. Yes, he has been going around working miracles, but they accused him of doing so through Beelzebub. Now he is claiming to be divine. He is claiming to be the Son of God. Here he is talking back, in their opinion, to the high priest and telling the high priest, 'everybody in this room has heard me' - which was true. Jesus spoke publicly in the temple. All the priests heard him, including the scribes and pharisees. How do we know? Just look at the controversies in chapters 5-9 in this Gospel, even if you don't go to the other Gospels. Everywhere he went in Israel, the scribes and the pharisees were ubiquitous. They picked up on all the issues he taught on, and fought him continuously. Everyone heard his teaching, **including Annas and Caiaphas.**

Apparently they expected him to cower before this great religious authority, but the Son of God fears no man. Indeed, any of us who have a right relationship with God also will fear no man. If we are those who cower before those in high positions, then we're not much use as witnesses. Poor Peter must die to himself. But in a very short time, you will see in Acts 4:5 the same Peter and John standing before the same Sanhedrin - the same men that are interrogating Jesus - and they are able to testify with authority under the power of the Holy Spirit. At that stage the new Peter is fearless. He has absolutely no fear whatsoever of the Sanhedrin.

So, between this night and that event, which is very soon, probably only months away the transformation of Peter – who is behaving like a jellyfish now – is wonderful to behold. He is transformed into a rock, one that the Lord can rely on. The transformation of Peter is one of the great miracles of the New Testament. It's something that we don't look at enough. Any of us who fall down to the level of below will be like Peter during Jesus' trial, and we won't be able to bear witness for Christ. It took Jesus being lifted up on the cross and lifted up in glory for Peter to rise from the dead. This is a very important lesson for us all. You may have an important position in the church, but that doesn't mean you are able to bear witness to Jesus! You may be an absolute nobody in the church and in the world, and you may be able to bear witness to Jesus **because your relationship with God is right.** It's not your position or office that enables you to be a witness.

One of the bystanders decides to abuse Jesus. "At these words, one of the guards standing by gave Jesus a slap in the face, saying, 'Is that the way to answer the high priest?' And Jesus

replied, "If there's something wrong in what I said, point it out, but if there is no offence in it, why do you strike me?" This is a very important. First of all, in case I forget to say it, this is not a proper trial, nor a courtroom. This is not Jesus on trial. It is merely a legal hearing. Notice that no one accuses Jesus. There is no jury, no judge, nothing. It's just that Jesus has to be arraigned before Annas - who considers himself the high priest even when he has long since been deposed.

Because Jesus said that he had spoken in public, we must go back to the Old Testament to look for the foundations in God's Word. Why would Jesus emphasise to Annas that he has spoken in public for all the world to hear? 1): Isaiah 45:19, the Lord says, "I am the Lord. I am unrivalled. I have not spoken in secret. I have not spoken in some corner of a darkened land. I have not said to Jacob's descendants, 'Seek me in chaos. I, the Lord, speak with directness, and I speak with clarity'". That text describes Jesus's teaching perfectly. 2): Isaiah 48:16, You read, "Come near and listen to this. From the beginning, I have never spoken to you obscurely". Annus will understand why Jesus is saying this.

So, when you hear Jesus saying in John 18:20, "I have spoken openly for all the world to hear" it means he has spoken in their synagogues, he has spoken out in the open, and in the temple. God's Word is for everyone. So, **everybody in the room has heard him**. What Jesus is doing there is exposing the hypocrisy, darkness, and deceit among them. You will remember in chapter 7 that he had said, 'The world hates him because he shows up the evil that is there'.

Now, why does Jesus say to the man who slapped him in the face, 'Why are you doing this?' There is a text in Matthew chapter 5:39 where we are told that if someone slaps you on the face, you should turn the other cheek. People wonder, should this be taken literally? You can see quite clearly that here Jesus doesn't turn the other cheek! So, we must ask the question, 'is Jesus not obeying his own teaching?' No, he is asking you to understand his teaching because he is speaking metaphorically. He doesn't mean that you are supposed to take every piece of abuse that comes to you. 'Turning the other cheek' here is that Jesus has decided to surrender into the hands of sinners for the sake of redeeming those very sinners. He wants to redeem Annas, Caiaphas, the priests, Sanhedrin, Scribes, Pharisees, and every soul to the end of time. But if someone needlessly offers him violence he wants that particular individual to own his own violence so that **he won't participate in the death of the Son of God**, and the consequences that will follow. He wants that man to think, to step back, not to take on such guilt, just go away!

Jesus is very merciful to the man who has slapped him in the face. The man was obviously trying to make an impression on Annas, and maybe get some benefit from Annas in the future. But Jesus is saying, 'don't get involved, unless you have to, because the mystery is beyond you.'



The other thing is to see that Jesus fears no man. Now, are scriptures show that anyone who has a true, living, steady, powerful relationship with God will not fear any human being. So, if we cower before the so-called greats or elites of the earth, it means there's something wrong in our understanding of who we are.

I want to pick up now in 18:24. "Annas sent him still bound to Caiaphas, the high priest". So, the abuse that Jesus received from the guards happened when he was with Caiaphas. John doesn't deal with this because that is the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin in the Synoptic Gospels. Now, why doesn't John deal with it? The reason is that John dealt with the issues in the first half of the Gospel during the public ministry of Jesus. All the issues are dealt with in the great controversies from Chapter 5-9. As I've said to you before Jesus was on trial before the people of Israel and their leaders all during his ministry, so, John won't repeat it here. He simply acknowledges that there were two high priests, and it was not sufficient to go before Annas. The real high priest was Caiaphas, so, the legal trial in which there will be accusers happens before Caiaphas, but it's not in John's Gospel. The next big event for John is the trial before Pilate. We will give much attention to that because, for John, this is the real trial.

Jesus has already been tried before the Sanhedrin in his public ministry in the first part of the Gospel. The trial before Pilate is **Jesus's trial before the whole world**, the Cosmos, before the unbelieving world. That is coming up in the next episode.

Thank you for listening. God bless you.