Exploring the Bible—Gospel of John (19)

Jesus’ Delivering Himself and Being Examined

**Scripture Reading:**

4 Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, Whom do you seek? 5 They answered Him, Jesus the Nazarene. He said to them, I am. And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. 6 When therefore He said to them, I am, they drew back and fell to the ground. 7 Then again He asked them, Whom do you seek? And they said, Jesus the Nazarene. 8 Jesus answered, I told you that I am; if therefore you seek Me, let these go away, 9 That the word might be fulfilled which He spoke, Of those whom You have given Me, I have not lost one.

17 Then the maid who kept the door said to Peter, Are you not also one of this man’s disciples? He said, I am not… 25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. Then they said to him, Are you not also one of His disciples? He denied and said, I am not. 26 One of the slaves of the high priest, who was a relative of him whose ear Peter had cut off, said, Did I not see you in the garden with Him? 27 Then Peter denied again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

31 Pilate said then to them, You take Him and judge Him according to your law. The Jews said to him, It is not lawful for us to kill anyone, 32 That the word of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was to die. 33 Pilate therefore entered again into the praetorium and called for Jesus. And he said to Him, You are the King of the Jews? 34 Jesus answered, Are you saying this of yourself, or did others tell you about Me? 35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Your nation and its chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done? 36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My attendants would be struggling so that I would not be delivered to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not from here. 37 Pilate said therefore to Him, So then You are a king? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I would testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice. 38 Pilate said to Him, What is truth? And having said this, he again went out to the Jews and said to them, I find no fault in Him. (John 18:4-38)

**Ministry Reading:**

Delivering Himself

The soldiers did not come to the Lord and capture Him while He was praying. No, Jesus went forth to meet them and said, “Whom are you seeking?” (18:4). They answered, “Jesus the Nazarene.” Then the Lord said to them, “I am” (18:5). When they heard this word, they drew back and fell to the ground (18:6). They were frightened at this word “I am,” which is the meaning of the name “Jehovah.” This indicates that the One they came to arrest was Jehovah God. The Lord did not take this opportunity to flee but asked them a second time, “Whom are you seeking?” Thus, it was not they who arrested the Lord; it was the Lord who handed Himself over to them.

The name Jehovah means “I Am that I Am.” The Lord Jesus is the great I Am. In 8:24 the Lord had told the Jewish people, “Unless you believe that I am, you shall die in your sins.” In other words, if they did not believe that Jesus was Jehovah, the very God, they would die in their sins. The Jewish people heard this, and when they heard it again, they fell down to the ground with fright. The Lord approached them the second time, asking, “Whom are you seeking?” He was not captured; He delivered Himself to them, proving His willingness to die. If He had been unwilling to die, no one could have captured Him, for He could have frightened everyone and caused them to fall to the ground. All He had to do was speak one word and His captors would have been dead. How could they have seized Him if He were unwilling to be captured? This proves that the purpose of John’s Gospel is to show that the Lord is the Lord of life and that He was willing to die in order to release Himself as life.

The Lord’s life was a life that could subdue and conquer death. He went into death by crucifixion and came out of it by resurrection. What better proof can there be than this that He is the life that death cannot influence, subdue, or conquer? He conquered death because He is the resurrection life (11:25). John 18 and 19 show how strong and powerful the Lord was when He went into death. When death was threatening, He was strong, powerful, and not subdued by its influence. He could go into death and come out of it without being hurt by it or held by it. What a proof that He is life!

Being Examined

The Lord was examined in His dignity by mankind (18:11—19:16), being examined as the Passover lamb was examined (Exo. 12:2-6). The Lord Jesus was crucified on the Passover as the Passover lamb. According to the type, before the Passover lamb was killed, it had to be examined to determine whether or not it had any blemish. The examination of Christ by mankind was the fulfillment of this type.

Firstly, the Lord was examined by the Jews according to the law of God in their religion (18:12-27). While the high priest was examining and judging the Lord, the high priest was being judged by the Lord in His dignity (18:19-21). The Lord was fearless and spoke to the high priest in a very dignified way. While the Passover lamb was being examined, the examiner was being examined by Him, and the blemishes of the examiner were exposed.

Then, The Lord was examined by the Gentiles according to the law of the Roman Empire (18:28-38a). The law of the Roman Empire was famous. Even today many countries base their law upon it. Before the Lord was examined by the Gentiles according to their law in the politics, He was examined according to the Jewish law for execution. Then He was examined by the Roman politics, by the law of the earthly power. The Jewish law for execution was to stone the criminal to death (18:31; Lev. 24:16). If that method of execution had been available at the time, the Lord Jesus might have been stoned to death. But that would not have fulfilled the prophecy spoken by the Lord when He said that He would be lifted up as the brass serpent was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness (3:14).

When the Jews slew the lamb during the Passover, they took two wooden bars and formed a cross. They put the lamb on the cross, tying two of the lamb’s legs to the foot of the cross and fastening the outstretched legs to the crossbar. Then they slew the lamb so that all its blood was shed. Thus, the killing of the Passover lamb was a portrait of the crucifixion of Christ. Although the Jewish method of execution of criminals according to their law was to stone them to death, the Jewish nation was not in power when the Lord was crucified. Hence, the Jewish nation had lost the legal right to execute criminals according to their law. Not long before the crucifixion of Christ, the Roman government adopted crucifixion as the method of executing criminals. This was decided under God’s sovereignty that the prophecies regarding Christ’s crucifixion might be fulfilled (vv. 31-32; 12:32-33).

When the Lord was brought before Pilate, again it seemed that Pilate judged Him, but eventually He judged Pilate. As we have seen, one of Pilate’s characteristics was his timidity; he feared the Jewish people. He knew that the Lord Jesus was sinless and declared that he could not find anything wrong with Him. But because of his fear of the Jews, he condemned the Lord and sentenced Him to death. This was unfair and unrighteous. When the Lord told Pilate that He had come into the world to “testify to the truth” and that “Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (18:37), Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” (18:38). This indicates that the Lord judged Pilate. In effect, the Lord said, “You are such a high administrator and yet you do not know what truth is. Then you are a false person. You are not true.” After this, Pilate was exposed and put to shame, and stopped judging the Lord.

After Pilate examined Him, he declared, “I find no fault whatever in him” (18:38; 19:4, 6). There was no blemish in this Passover lamb; He was fully qualified to be the lamb for God’s people.

Question for Discussion: What is the meaning of the Lord Jesus’ answer: “I am”? And what is the significance of His examination?

Reference: Life-Study of John, Msg. 42