

John 18 • Non-Believers' Reaction to Christ

Introduction

Within the context of Christ's arrest and trials we have a vivid example of the spiritual warfare that is waged in this life on this planet; it amounts to an attack on God's Word. Satan's attacks always come down to trying to silence the message through deception or to silence the messenger through persecution. This is because God's Word is much more than just a message:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
—John 1:1*

JESUS is the Word, therefore the battle is about Christ Himself.

¹When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples. ²Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. ³Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, "Whom do you seek?"

⁵They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene."

He said to them, "I am He." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. ⁶So when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.

[Read v.1-6]

Q: What specifically happens that clearly reveals that those seeking Jesus were not accepting Him as Christ the King, but merely as a man, and therefore show themselves to be non-believers?

A: "...they drew back and fell to the ground" in His presence.

When people come into Jesus' presence and accept Him as Christ, they fall **towards** Him, at His feet, and worship Him; when they reject Him as Christ they fall **away**, withdrawing from Him.

But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet.

—Mark 7:25

But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

—Luke 5:8

The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened.

—Luke 8:35

She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word.

—Luke 10:39

Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan.

—Luke 17:15-16

And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.

—Matthew 28:9

Point: Non-believers', when confronted by the call of Christ, are repulsed, falling away from Him; believers are humbled and fall towards Him to worship Him.

¹⁹The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. ²⁰Jesus 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. ²¹Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said.”

²²When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, “Is that the way You answer the high priest?”

²³Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?”

²⁴So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

²⁸Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.

²⁹Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this Man?”

³⁰They answered and said to him, “If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you.”

³¹So Pilate said to them, “Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law.”

The Jews said to him, “We are not permitted to put anyone to death,” ³²to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.

³³Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?”

³⁴Jesus answered, “Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?”

³⁵Pilate answered, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?”

³⁶Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be

[Read v. 19-24]

Q: According to v.19, what is their main concern? What does this indicate about them?

A: Their main concern is Jesus' teaching and disciples, the product of His teaching. They are concerned about His Words far more than His signs or miracles.

Q: What is Jesus' own observation concerning His teaching?

A: “I have spoke nothing in secret.” (v.20)

Q: How does Jesus' response fit in with their reaction to strike Him?

A: They want Him and His teaching silenced.

Point: Non-believers in their rejection of His Word, become His enemy. They are incapable of passively ignoring His Word and feel compelled to actively silence the message.

[Read v.28-32]

Q: When attempts to silence by verbal force have failed, what is the next step often taken by non-believers?

A: Persecution, or invoking physical silence. This is evidenced by their desire to not just put Christ in jail, but to execute Him.

Q: According to v.31, how far will non-believers go in terms of persecution in order to achieve silence?

A: They will go outside the boundaries of even their own law or standards, often violating them in the process. They remove any restrictions in the way of achieving silence.

Q: What is the chief characteristic of Christian persecutors that is revealed in their answer to Pilate in v.30?

A: They consider themselves to be the only judge with no peer and no need to even justify their actions. They are ruled by pride, making themselves higher and greater than anything or any other.

Point: Non-believers will escalate their efforts to silence Christ's Word to the point of physical persecution and death in order to silence the messenger.

[Read v.33-38a]

Q: Taking this exchange as an example, what is the precise point on which Jesus is being accepted or rejected?

A: His Word. He makes the points that

- “I have come into the world, to testify to the truth”, and,
- “Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice”.

To accept Christ is to accept His testimony—His Word; to accept His Word is to hear Him as opposed to refusing to listen.

[Continued on next page.]

John 18 • Non-Believers' Reaction to Christ, Page 2 of 3

fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.”

³⁷Therefore Pilate said to Him, “So You are a king?”

Jesus answered, “You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”

³⁸Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?”

And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, “I find no guilt in Him. ³⁹But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?”

⁴⁰So they cried out again, saying, “Not this Man, but Barabbas.” Now Barabbas was a robber.

¹⁷Then 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.”

²⁵Now 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.”

²⁶One 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?”

Q: How is Pilate’s response, “What is truth?”, a typical response of non-believers?

A: An argument they present to silence all further discussion is to put forth the notion that **all** truth is relative, and therefore no agreement can be reached on the actual meaning of Christ’s Word. (Ever heard of biblical “scholars” that claim the entire Bible is just one big allegory and not absolute truth?)

Point: *If they can’t silence the message, nor silence the messenger, non-believers attempt to redefine it into something trivial and unsupportable by making **EVERYTHING** trivial and unsupportable. It’s an attempt to silence God’s message and messengers by making everything indistinguishable.*

[Read v.38b-40]

Q: Using this example, in the end what do non-believers do to complete their rejection of Christ, to individually silence Him permanently?

A: They replace Him with someone or something else.

Point: *Non-believers work through various stages of deeper and deeper rejection of Christ, seeking to silence His Word both publicly and personally. It begins by being repulsed at His Word rather than attracted, and continues in their efforts to silence the message, silence the messengers, establish their own framework in which absolute truth has no part and, finally, to replace Him altogether with something or someone else.*

[Read v.17 and 25-26]

Q: What is the principle point on which Peter is confronted in regards to Jesus? What does it mean?

A: Whether or not he is a disciple of Christ. They want to know whether he has accepted or rejected Christ’s Word, Christ’s teaching.

Q: How does this serve as an example to us?

A: Our testimony of Christ to others is measured by the degree to which we adhere to His Word, His teaching, and are willing to stand up for it.

Point: *Non-believers don’t mind curiosity, but want to ensure you haven’t crossed the line to actually embrace Christ’s teachings personally.*

Overall Application

- *What has been your initial response to those who question your beliefs in Christ? What should it be?*
- *How aware are you that all forms of persecution and resistance are disguised attempts to ignore, silence, or render ineffective God’s Word? What is the appropriate response for each situation?*
- *Regardless of the choice of action non-believers select, what is the correct course of action for believers in every one of these situations? [Hint: Adhere to and never deny God’s Word.]*