

The Gospel According To John

Jesus' Betrayal and Arrest

John 18:1-11

Introduction

The eighteenth chapter of the Gospel of John is one of the really thrilling chapters of the Bible because it is an historical narrative that reveals the excellencies of Jesus Christ in a way that few others do.

Beginning with chapter 18 are the final events of the life of Jesus Christ. This is the climax. Without this climax, the gospel would be no gospel.

The Purpose of Christ's Birth

Jesus Christ was born to die. The Word of God clearly tells us that Jesus Christ was never trapped, tricked, or surprised -- He was never a victim. He went to the cross of His own design and His own will because He was born for that express purpose.

I. JESUS' SUPREME COURAGE

- To purpose in His mind to go to a cross knowing it means that all His purity and sinlessness will be violated, that He will bear the sin of His people, and that He will be abandoned by the God with whom He has been face to face throughout all eternity, reveals a kind of courage that is infinite and supreme beyond anything a mere human being could accomplish.
- It had been Jesus' custom throughout the years of His ministry to spend His evenings on the Mount of Olives in this Garden. (vv. 1-2; John 7:53-8:1)
- As Jesus was leaving Jerusalem on this night, it was Passover season. Thousands of pilgrims would move into the city from all over the land to offer sacrifices in the Temple. Lambs were being slain incessantly during those days. In fact, thirty years after Christ, historians tell us that there were 256 thousand lambs slain at the Passover in Jerusalem. You can imagine the mess that slaughtering that many lambs on one altar in the Temple would create -- blood running everywhere.
- The Jews had provided for this problem. They had built a channel which ran from the Temple ground, which sat immediately above the valley of Kidron, down into the brook Kidron. All of the blood would run down this channel into the brook.
- Undoubtedly, as Jesus was leaving the city of Jerusalem on that last night, He stepped across the brook and saw that brook red with the blood of all the lambs that were being slain for the sins of the people. His own coming sacrifice must have become very vivid in His mind.

II. JESUS IN COMPLETE CONTROL

A. Fulfilling a Picture

- Every Old Testament sacrifice was a picture of Jesus Christ -- a prophecy that a final sacrifice would come.
- David is a type of Christ. In 2 Samuel 15:12-14, David was betrayed by his own friend Ahithophel, and David had to escape. When David escaped, he went out of the gate in Jerusalem, down the slope, across the Kidron, and up to the Mount of Olives with his faithful followers (vv. 23, 30).
- Ahithophel and David in this incident become a perfect picture in the Old Testament of what was to come when the true Christ -- the real King, David's greater Son -- arrived. So, Jesus Christ fulfills the typical Old Testament prophecy seen in the incident involving David and Ahithophel. And Judas becomes one even more treacherous than Ahithophel.

B. Fulfilling prophecy

- The main reason Jesus went to the Garden was to make it easy for Judas and the soldiers to arrest Him
- The Old Testament details what Judas was going to do not only in the typical prophecy of Ahithophel's situation, but in very accurate verbal prophecy (e.g., Ps. 41:9; 55:12-14).
- Zechariah 11:13 even prophesies the fact that the chief priests would use the thirty pieces of silver to buy the potter's field.
- Jesus went to that Garden because He was forcing the confrontation that would result in His death.

C. Jesus' Design

- If Jesus had allowed Himself to be arrested in the middle of Jerusalem, there would have been an insurrection and a revolution that would have torn apart the city and perhaps might have ended in the killing of the disciples, because Jesus was popular.
- Jesus also wanted to prove to the disciples that He was not a victim. He could have gone by Himself to the Garden, had the disciples stay in Jerusalem, and by word of mouth they could have heard Jesus had been captured. But their faith would have gone down the drain and they would have seen Him as a victim. So Jesus says, "Come with Me. You are going to see how it really is."
- As a result, the disciples can stand there in that calmer atmosphere and watch what happens and see that Jesus is no victim, but a victor.
- In addition, they can also be protected by Jesus. This fulfillment is merely physical preservation, but as D.A. Carson suggests, *this is not simply the substitution of physical safety for eternal salvation. Rather, it is the symbol of it, an illustration of it- more, it is the first step in securing the eschatological reality.*” Thus, this is a symbol or illustration of a greater eternal salvation.
- The leaders of Israel had wanted to get Jesus many times, but they feared the people. Jesus, by going to the Garden, eliminated the problem of their fear and made it very easy to arrest Him. And He took His eleven along just so they would see that it was a voluntary surrender, and that Jesus is in control of the entire situation (John 10:17-18).

D. Jesus' Authority

- The Greek word “speira” referred to a Roman cohort, which contained a minimum of six hundred men. There are some historians who feel that as many as twelve hundred could be in a cohort, yet a detachment from a cohort might have been as small as two hundred men.
- They were professional soldiers -- like none other in the world.
- In addition to the Roman cohort, there was a large group of the Temple police, along with the chief priests and the Pharisees. They all came after Christ with Judas out front.
- They came with torches to search for the Light of the world.
- The "He" isn't present in the Greek. So Jesus just says, “I am.”
- All Jesus had to do was say His name and they all went down. Jesus is standing and the whole Roman army is on the ground.
- The disciples saw that Jesus had power over them. He wanted them to know, He wanted us to know, He wanted Judas to know, the whole Roman army to know, and all the Jews to know that He was in control. He was laying His life down; nobody was taking it away from Him.
- They were soldiers. They weren't stupid, standing one inch behind each other. They were in some kind of formation. They knew what they were doing. They fell down because of the power of His word.
- This was another sign recorded by John to show us that Jesus Christ was no victim; He was the majestic victor in control of everything. And I think He revealed His power most of all for the delight and faith of the disciples, who would see that He was not a victim.

III. HIS SUPREME OBEDIENCE (v. 11)

A. Drinking The Cup Of God's Wrath

- The idea of cup in the Old Testament is associated with judgment (i.e., the cup of His wrath; Jer. 25:15).
- Revelation 14:10 mentions the cup of indignation. Jesus was saying that He was going to drink a cup full of wrath.

B. Dying In Obedience To God's Plan

- Jesus willingly drank the cup. And He drank it to the bottom. He died our death.
- He died in love for His own and in obedience to the Father's plan. That is supreme obedience.

C. Dying to bring in the Kingdom

- Peter's response is understandable and in some ways it even seems commendable, but like when Jesus rebukes Peter, it turns out that his action is actually opposed to the kingdom.
- Carson calls Peter's assault on Malchus not only useless but "*a denial of the work to which Jesus has just consecrated himself*" (p. 579).

D. Jesus' Firm Resolution to Be Faithful to His Father

- Jesus is the perfect example of faithfulness to the will of God no matter how difficult the circumstances become.
- Most of our "dilemmas" do not revolve around biblical "gray areas" but involve circumstances that are difficult and yet God has spoken clearly to us about what we must do. *Hebrews 12:1-4*