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“Whom Do You Seek?”

JOHN 18:1-11

Introduction

1. Have you ever been betrayed by someone you thought was a friend you could trust?
2. Betrayal wounds us deeply, especially when it comes from someone from whom we least expect it.
3. Even though Jesus knew, when He chose Judas to be one of His disciples, that this man would eventually betray Him, He still loved Judas and invested His energies into Him.
4. Even though many of us have read the passages of Judas betrayal numerous times, it still stings to know what Judas would lose because of his choice and what was about to happen to our Lord.
5. Still, we know that it was necessary for Jesus to die on our behalf. It had to happen, if we were ever to have fellowship with our Father.
6. Tonight, as we examine these first eleven verses of John 18, I hope to bring alive once again the events of that evening, and so cause us to think more deeply about what happened.

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I. Gethsemane: The Scene of the Betrayal

“When 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.” (John 18:1, NASB95)

A. THE TRIP THERE

1. The journey to the Garden of Gethsemane required Jesus and His party

leaving the upper room where they had eaten supper and heading east.

2. They would go down into the valley which separated the Temple mount from the Mount of Olives.
3. At the lowest point, they crossed Kidron Brook and began to go up the Mount of Olives.
4. Almost a thousand years earlier, King David was betrayed by a friend named Ahithophel while crossing this same brook and going up the Mount of Olives in an effort to escape the coup being led by his own son, Absalom (2 Samuel 15:23, 30-31).
5. There, on the slopes of this mount, was an olive grove, a garden, where “Jesus had often met . . . with His disciples” (John 18:2).

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B. JESUS AND THE ELEVEN

1. On this night, Jesus was accompanied by His eleven remaining disciples.
 - a. Peter, James and John — the inner circle.
 - b. Andrew, Phillip, Bartholomew (Nathanael, John 1:45), Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon, Judas the son of James (Thaddaeus, Mark 3:18)
2. As I have pointed out before, these men had shared some 3 ½ years of their lives with Him.
3. Only a short while ago, these men had promised the Lord that if necessary they would die with Him, but they would certainly not deny Him (Mark 14:31).
4. Little did they know what lay ahead.

2b

C. THE TIME IN THE GARDEN

1. John does not tell us about the time which Jesus and the eleven spent in the garden; we must look to the other writers for this information.
2. Matthew and Mark tell us that when Jesus first entered the garden, He instructed eight of the disciples to “Sit here while I go over there and pray”

(Matthew 26:36; Mark 14:32).

3. Three of the disciples — Peter, James & John — Jesus took with Him (Matthew 26:37; Mark 14:33).
4. To these men Jesus revealed His distress; “My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death” (Mark 14:34), and told them, “remain here and keep watch” (Mark 14:34).
5. Jesus “went a little beyond them . . . fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by” (Mark 14:35).
6. Three times He prayed that His Father might remove the cup — the physical and spiritual suffering and death — necessary for our salvation.
7. Three times He came back to Peter, James and John only to find them asleep.
8. The third time He said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!” (Mark 14:42).
9. It is at this point that John’s gospel picks the story back up.

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[However, before we look at what happens, I would like for you to consider those who came to arrest Jesus.]

II. The Arresting Party

“Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.” (John 18:3, NASB95)

A. “JUDAS” ISCARIOT

1. Once a faithful follower of Jesus, now the one willing to identify Jesus to those who would arrest Him.

2. For thirty pieces of silver he would betray the Son of God.
3. This was the price, which under the Old Testament law, was to be paid for a slave who had been gored to death by an ox.

3a**B. "THE ROMAN COHORT"**

1. Other translations refer to this body of men as "a band, company or detachment of soldiers."
2. The term which John uses (*speiran*) lets us know that these were not Jews, but Roman auxiliaries.
 - a. On paper, these troops numbered 1,000 strong (*i.e.* 760 foot soldiers and 760 cavalry)
 - b. In practice, however, they normally numbered 600 men.
 - c. In reality, this detachment may have been as few as 200.
3. Regardless, the number was far more than necessary to arrest a single man, even if the eleven with Him chose to fight.

3b**C. "OFFICERS FROM THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND THE PHARISEES"**

1. These were most likely the "temple police" who had the primary responsibility for arresting Jesus.
2. On an earlier occasion, when Jesus came to Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths (*John 7*), the chief priests and the Pharisees had very likely sent some of these same officers to seize Him then (*John 7:32*).
3. The Roman cohort served more as support personnel in case the situation should escalate.

3c**D. THEY "CAME THERE WITH LANTERNS AND TORCHES AND WEAPONS"**

1. The fact that it was Passover indicates there was a full moon.
2. No doubt, those in the arresting party expected a pursuit across the Mount of Olives, resistance from His followers.

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III. The Arrest

A. JESUS WENT FORTH TO MEET JUDAS AND THOSE WITH HIM

1. Earlier, I shared with you Jesus' words to Peter, James and John as Mark recorded them, "the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!" (Mark 14:42).
2. Here, in verse 4, John shares with us an insight into Jesus' foreknowledge: "So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" (John 18:4).
 - a. Jesus knew what was coming, but He did not attempt to run or hide.
 - b. Instead, this one, solitary man walked out to face hundreds of armed soldiers, and asked them, "Whom do you seek?"
3. When they answered, "Jesus the Nazarene" or "Jesus of Nazareth," Jesus responded with two words — **Εγώ εἰμι** — which are often translated, "I am He," but simply say, "I am."
4. Instead of stepping forward to take possession of their prisoner, something else happened.
5. John tells us that when Jesus said to them, "I am," "they drew back and fell to the ground" (John 18:6).
6. Why did they do this? John does not tell us, but I would like to offer a possible answer.
7. As I mentioned earlier in our lesson tonight, there was a previous time, during the Feast of Booths, when Jesus was in Jerusalem.
8. On that occasion, "the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to arrest Him" (John 7:32).
9. However, when those officers returned empty handed, the chief priests and Pharisees asked them, "Why did you not bring Him?" (John 7:45).

10. They answered, “Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks” (John 7:46).
11. It was also on this occasion as Jesus was teaching in the temple that He told the Jews, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56).
12. They challenged Him on this statement, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” (John 8:57).
13. Jesus responded, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:58).
14. This prompted them to pick up stones to throw at Him, but He hid Himself and went out of the temple.
15. They did this because they understood that Jesus was taking God’s self identification and applying it to Himself.
16. In Exodus 3:13, when Moses was trying to avoid going to Egypt to lead God’s people out:

“Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?”” (Exodus 3:13, NASB95)
17. God’s response to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14).
18. Thus, when Jesus said to those who had come to arrest Him, “I am,” fear may have gripped the Jewish segment of the soldiers and they fell back.

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B. JESUS’ PROTECTION OF THE ELEVEN

1. Jesus again asked those who had come out to arrest Him, “Whom do you seek?” (John 18:7).
2. Again they said, “Jesus the Nazarene” (John 18:7b).

3. Jesus reinforced what He had said earlier, "I told you that I am He," but then added, "if you seek Me, let these go their way" (John 18:8).
4. In other words, "I am the man you want. You have no need for these men (the disciples). Let them go."
5. John tells us that Jesus spoke these words in order to "fulfill the word which He spoke" (v. 9), referring back to what He had prayed earlier that evening on behalf of the eleven:

"While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled." (**John 17:12, NASB95**)

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C. JESUS' HEALING OF MALCHUS

"Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus. So Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"" (John 18:10–11, NASB95)

1. Peter's courage and loyalty prompt his sudden response.
2. He drew out a small sword in an attempt to protect the Lord, and most likely swung at the person nearest to him, who just happened to be a slave of the high priest, whose name was Malchus.
3. However, Peter was a fisherman, not a swordsman, so he only managed to cut off the slave's ear.
4. Jesus immediately told Him to put his sword away.
5. According to Luke, Jesus touched Malchus' ear and healed him (Luke 22:51).
6. Matthew records for us something else which Jesus' said to His disciples that evening (Matthew 26:53-54).

"Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then will the

Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?”” (Matthew 26:53–54, NASB95)

- a. At any point throughout this ordeal, Jesus could have asked His Father and He would have sent to Jesus’ aid more than 72,000 angels.
- b. As Jesus pointed out to the disciples that evening, “the Scriptures . . . say that it must happen this way.”

Conclusion

1. Think about those words, “the Scriptures . . . say that it must happen this way.”
2. John ends his account of Jesus’ arrest with a similar statement, “the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11).
3. Earlier that evening, Jesus had prayed in that same garden that if possible, His Father might remove this cup from Him.
4. Aren’t you glad that God didn’t remove the cup.
5. If He had, we would still be lost and condemned by our sins, because the necessary sacrifice for our sins would never have taken place.

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6. However, as the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5:6, “while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.”
7. Two verses later he adds, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).