

**The Arrest of Christ**

**18:1-5**

**Part One**

We are now moving on in our examination of the Gospel of John from the upper room discourse and the high priestly prayer of Christ to John's account of His arrest. This account is recorded for us in **John 18:1-11**. So let me read this passage for you. **“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. (2) Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. (3) Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. (4) So Jesus, knowing all 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 He.’ And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. (6) So when He said to them, ‘I am He,’ they drew back and fell on the ground. (7) Therefore He again asked them, ‘Whom do you seek?’ And they said, ‘Jesus the Nazarene.’ (8) Jesus answered, ‘I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way,’ (9) to fulfill the word which He spoke, ‘Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one.’ (10) 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?’”**

So what has John done for us in these verses? He has given us, very much like every other gospel writer, an account of Christ's arrest. And what specifically did John choose to emphasize? John chose, in his account of Christ's arrest, to emphasize Christ's mastery over everyone and everything that was involved. In fact, one Bible commentator entitled His account, **“Who arrested whom?”**

In other words, the Apostle John wanted to make sure in his account of Christ's arrest that he communicated very clearly that Christ was not defeated by wicked people but rather that He Himself in His supremacy had orchestrated His own arrest. This is what John wanted to communicate. And

in communicating Christ's supremacy John ultimately highlighted for us certain features of His majesty. So how many features did he highlight?

The Apostle John, in pointing out Christ's supremacy in his account of Christ's arrest, highlighted four different features of Christ's majesty (John 18:1-11). This morning we will begin to look at those features.

My hope as we examine these features is that we ourselves will strive to emulate them. In other words, my hope is that God would use this account of Christ's arrest to motivate us to want to be more like Christ and that we might be able to, because of our study, see very specifically how this might be done. This is my hope. So what is the first feature?

Christ's courage was the first feature John highlighted (John 18:1-5). Let me make this perfectly clear. If we are going to follow in the footsteps of Jesus it will invariably require us at various points in time over the course of our lives to be courageous just as Christ over the course of His life was courageous.

This should be something that true disciples of Christ can quickly relate to. And how is that? It is because courage is something that will be continually something that we will have to exercise. Certainly it will have to be exercised in sharing the gospel and certainly it will need to be exercised in acts of simple obedience as we seek to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel.

Certainly my wife I believe could say amen to this. It certainly hasn't been easy for her to live with me and to follow my lead but this is something that she has willingly done of the years and it has repeatedly resulted in having to exercise courage.

For a disciple of Christ courage is not an option, just as courage was not an option for Christ. Repeatedly throughout His life He acted courageously. And it was Christ's courage that the Apostle John chose to highlight in His account of Christ's arrest. And where do we see this courage specifically highlighted in John's account of Christ's arrest? Christ's courage was highlighted in **John 18:1-5**.

So let me read for you the very first words of verse one. So what does it say? It says this, **“When Jesus had spoken these words...”**

When John tells us that after Jesus had spoken these words, he was referring to all the words that He had spoken to His eleven disciples following the departure of Judas from the upper room starting all the way back in **John 13:31** and continuing to the end of **John 17**.

So after Jesus had spoken these words, what does John record for us next? Let us continue to read the verse. And what does it say? **“When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples.”**

So where exactly did they go forth from? I believe the answer to that question is that Christ and His disciples went forth from the upper room where all the words He had just been referred to had been spoken. And where were they going forth to? I believe that the answer to that question is found by reading the rest of the verse. Let us once again go back to **John 18:1** but this time we will read the entire verse. So what does it say? **“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.”**

Where did Jesus and His disciples go forth to? Jesus and His disciples went forth to a garden. Isn't this exactly what the verse said? After Jesus and His disciples left the upper room they made their way to a garden, but not just to any garden, but rather to a very special garden called Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36; Mark 14:32).

How do we know this? We know this because **Matthew 26:36** and **Mark 14:32** make this very clear.

And where was this garden located? It was located on the Mount of Olives just east of the city, and in order to get there Christ and His disciples would have to pass over the ravine of the Kidron just as **John 18:1** indicated that they in fact did.

Now I would like to point out something for you that is very interesting about this ravine, which was 200 feet directly below the temple mount. This ravine was used to dispose blood. What blood? The blood of approximately

250,000 lambs that each year were slaughtered during the Passover. That was the blood that the Kidron Ravine was used to dispose.

So how did the Jews get the blood that was spilt on the ground from the sacrifices on the temple mount down to the Kidron ravine and what happened to the blood once it got there?

The Jews created a channel from the temple mount so that when the lambs were sacrificed their blood would collect in this channel and ultimately flow into the Kidron ravine. But this was not the end of the story. At this time of year, which was the time of the Passover, there would most likely be a stream running through the ravine and this stream would then help dispose the blood that had been deposited into the ravine by the channel the Jews had built. I believe that this piece of information helps this story to come alive. And how would this piece of information do that?

On this particular night, as Jesus left the upper room to make His way along with His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane, He would have had to cross this stream. Was He actually able to see that blood in the water or on the rocks that lined the banks of the stream that had been deposited there via this channel? I don't know since it was night when they crossed the stream, but He even though He may not have been able to see it He certainly would have known that the blood or its residue was there, and in light of this knowledge this blood-stained stream had to be a poignant reminder of His own imminent blood sacrifice that He, in a very few short hours, would offer up on the cross of Calvary for the remission of sins.

So after He left the upper room and crossed over this ravine and also the stream within the ravine and had entered the garden itself that was located on the Mount of Olives, what does John tell us next?

Let me now read for you **John 18:2**. “**Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples.**” The Apostle John linked Christ's common practice of going to the Garden of Gethsemane to Judas and to His betrayal.

So how was it linked? John 18:2 makes it very clear that Judas knew, based on past behavior, that Christ and His fellow disciples could be found in the

Garden of Gethsemane that night. So how confident was he? He was very confident! How do we know this?

Judas was confident because Christ and His disciples had been going to the Garden of Gethsemane every night since they had left Bethany six days earlier according to **Luke 21:37** and **Luke 22:39,49**.

Now wasn't this a lucky break for Judas? He was looking for an opportune time and place when He, along with various religious and secular authorities, might be able to seize Christ without any possibility of a public disturbance, and obviously he and the various authorities had now found such a time and place. And what was that time and place? The answer is simple, the Garden of Gethsemane late at night.

Now I would like to go back and revise an earlier statement. Remember when I said, "Now wasn't this a lucky break for Judas that Christ had established this pattern of going to the Garden of Gethsemane late at night." Remember that statement? I was being facetious. It was not a lucky break for Judas at all. Christ was going there with His disciples for a very specific reason.

Christ orchestrated the pattern of going to the Garden of Gethsemane each night with His disciples in order to provide Judas the opportunity to betray Him and Roman authorities the opportunity to arrest Him. That was the primary reason why this pattern had been established.

So was the establishment of this pattern and Christ's determination to go to the Garden of Gethsemane that night an expression of courage? Of course it was. He knew what was going to happen that night in that Garden, but He went anyway knowing that very shortly He would be arrested and would be taking His first step toward the cross of Calvary, but even so He went there.

So now let us go on to **John 18:3**. And what does it say? "**Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.**"

It appears from these words that Judas most likely, after being dismissed by Christ from the upper room in **John 13:37** with the words "**what you do quickly,**" did exactly that. If Judas had not acted quickly it would have been

impossible to assemble the people John told us were assembled in the middle of night in **John 18:3**. So how did this whole thing come together so quickly?

Judas earlier in the week, according to **Matthew 26:14-16**, had already, for thirty pieces of silver, made an arrangement with the chief priests to betray Christ. Therefore in light of this arrangement, not only did Judas begin to look for an opportunity to signal the chief priests when an arrest could be facilitated, but the chief priests themselves would have in light of this arrangement needed to take steps so that when the signal was given they could act quickly in providing the necessary troops to facilitate the arrest.

These are the forces that we see meeting Judas in **John 18:3**, probably at some prearranged place here. So, what are some of the things we can note about these forces that came out to meet Judas in order to facilitate the arrest?

The forces that came out to meet Judas in order to facilitate the arrest of Jesus included a Roman cohort. A Roman cohort consisted typically of 600 troops. In addition to the Roman cohort there were also officers that were sent from the chief priests and Pharisees. The officers that were sent from the chief priests and Pharisees would have been the temple police and could have easily numbered several hundred. So what else do we notice about these forces that had been set aside to facilitate the arrest of Jesus?

These forces carried torches and weapons. How ironic this scene must have been. Let me read for you a statement that was made by John MacArthur in commenting on this particular scene.

“Historians tell us that at that time of month, there was a full moon. Jerusalem would have been brilliantly lit up by that full moon and they would have had no need for torches and lanterns to see their way up the Mount of Olives. Historians say that this indicates that they evidently felt they would have to search for Jesus who would be hiding somewhere in the nooks and crannies of the hillside. So, they came with torches to search for the light of the world and with swords to fight the Prince of Peace.”

Now do you see what I mean when I pointed out the irony of the scene that is described for us in **John 18:3**? Clearly this is a perfect example of the fact that they had no clue who Jesus truly was. If they did, rather than coming to Him in such large numbers with torches and weapons, they would have approached Him reverently even eagerly with their hands outstretched in faith in order to receive from Him the gift of eternal life. But obviously this was not going to happen. Why? They truly did not have a clue who He truly was.

So how did Jesus respond to this very large military force that had come out of Jerusalem in order to seize Him? Did He run away and hide as perhaps they had anticipated? No! This is not what He did.

Let us now read for you **John 18:4**. **“So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’”**

Jesus, knowing all things that were coming upon Him, chose not to avoid those who came to arrest Him, but rather He chose to go out from the garden to meet them (John 18:4).

So once again let me ask you. did this action on Christ’s part take courage? Of course it did! He knew what was going to happen. Isn’t this clear from Matthew’s account when He records for us how Jesus in anticipation of the events that were about to unfold prayed this prayer three different times, **“My father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”**

He knew that if He went out to them that He would be arrested, and tried, and then crucified; but this was something that He was prepared to do in order fulfill His earthly mission and be obedient to His Father. So rather than waiting for them to enter the garden He left the garden and went to them.

So what was very likely the first thing that happened as He exited the garden and came toward this very large group of men who had come out to arrest Him? Most likely as soon as Jesus exited the garden and approached this multitude, Judas must have approached Him and according to the grammar of **Luke 22:47** repeatedly kissed Jesus. This action on the part of Judas had

already been agreed to be the manner in which He would identify Jesus as the man whom they had been sent to arrest.

So what happened after Judas identified Jesus as the one whom they had been sent to arrest? This was most likely the time when Jesus asked those whom had come to arrest Him this question, **“Whom do you seek?”**

And how did His would-be captors respond? Let us now read **John 18:5**. **“They answered Him, ‘Jesus the Nazarene.’ He said to them, ‘I am He.’”**

Grammatically, in the Greek the “He” is not present in John 18:5, and therefore what Jesus literally said in response to their question was “I am,” which was a common designation for God.

Now let us for a moment sit back and reflect on what we just read in **John 18:4-5**. This large group of men had come out to arrest someone whom they perhaps anticipated would attempt to flee from them, but that is not what they found. Rather they found themselves confronted by a commanding figure who, rather than running away from them, actually came out to meet them and represented Himself not as someone who was fearful and intimidated by what was happening but as someone who was fully in control of everything that was now taking place.

So let me ask you this question. On this night when Christ with full knowledge faced His arrest, was He fearful or courageous? Clearly He was courageous.

So let me ask you a question. If Christ needed to be courageous in seeking to be obedient to the Father, do believe that it will be necessary for us to be courageous in seeking to be obedient to Christ? And what is answer? Absolutely! May God give us the grace in the pursuit of obedience, like Christ, not to be fearful, but courageous.