

EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #69

John 18:1-11

The betrayal of Jesus Christ is a critical part of His life. He had been sent by God to die for sins and the only way that can happen is if someone betrays Him.

Verse 1 tells us that after Jesus had completed the entire Upper Room Discourse which began in chapter 13 and concluded with chapter 17, He went over the “ravine of the Kidron” and into a garden. The Greek word “ravine” (γρεμαρρος) literally means torrential, winter flowing (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 480). What this indicates is that there was flowing water in the ravine, which was running through it from winter meltage because this ravine is typically dry during the summer months. It has also been observed that often the Kidron brook was muddy and bloody because of the animal sacrifices that were offered at the Temple. **So in crossing this ravine, He could not help but think of the blood that was about to flow out of His veins.**

Now according to the Talmud, the Kidron Valley is called Kidron because of its cedar trees (Thomas Whitelaw, *Commentary on John*, p. 369). It is located east of Jerusalem between the wall of the city and the Mount of Olives. On the western slope of the Mount is a garden, estate-type place which is called the “Garden of Gethsemane.” In fact, some have observed that this garden is surrounded by a fence that typically was closed. Jesus obviously had access to this garden because this was a spot where Christ had often gone with His disciples to pray (Luke 22:39). Jerusalem was filled with people arriving for the Passover and this garden would be a very private place to spend in prayer. The name Gethsemane actually means oil press. It was a garden filled with olive trees and the olives were picked and pressed to get the oil. **So in going to this garden, He could not help but think of the suffering He would endure as He would be pressed just like an oil press or winepress in taking on Himself the wrath of God.**

The whole problem of sin began in a garden (Garden of Eden) and the whole solution to the sin problem also began in a garden (Garden of Gethsemane). That is truly what these verses are all about. The main point of this section is this:

THE WHOLE SIN PROBLEM BEGAN IN A GARDEN (EDEN) AND THE WHOLE SOLUTION TO THE SIN PROBLEM BEGAN IN A GARDEN (GETHSEMANE) WHICH BEGAN WITH A BETRAYAL BY JUDAS.

Now before we move through the betrayal events, we want to clearly see that Jesus is going to this garden because He knows exactly what was going to happen (John 18:4). None of this is taking Him by surprise. He is the One who is orchestrating all the events in harmony with God the Father and He is the one who willingly permits all of these things to happen.

Now the scene in the Garden is recorded by Matthew (Matthew 26:36-56), Mark (Mark 14:32-52), Luke (Luke 22:39-53) and here in John (**18:1-11**). From these accounts we may observe the following chronology:

- 1) Jesus came into the garden with His disciples. Matthew 26:36a
- 2) Jesus told the disciples to sit down while He went to pray. Matthew 26:36b; Mark 14:32
- 3) Jesus took Peter, James and John with Him a little further and He became emotionally .
overwhelmed with what was about to take place. Matthew 26:37; Mark 14:33
- 4) Jesus told the three to stay where they were and watch while He went a stone's throw
distance away to pray. Matthew 26:38-39; Mark 14:34; Luke 22:41
- 5) Jesus came back to the three and found them sleeping so He woke them up and asked them
to pray. Matthew 26:40-41; Mark 14:37-38
- 6) Jesus went away a second time to pray. Matthew 26:42; Mark 14:39
- 7) Jesus came back to the three disciples and found them sleeping again. Matthew 26:43;
Mark 14:40.
- 8) Jesus left them sleeping and went away for a third time to pray. Matthew 26:44;
Mark 14:41
- 9) Jesus came back to the three disciples and woke them up and told them it was time to go meet
Judas. Matthew 26:45-46; Mark 14:42

Now during the prayers of Jesus Christ, He prayed to the Father that if it were possible that He would remove "this cup" from Him (Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42). Just exactly what cup was He praying about?

1. Some have suggested that He was praying in His humanity and thinking about all of the details of His physical death. His humanity was wanting deliverance from the death process. There are several problems with this view. The hypostatic union teaches that the humanity and the Deity of Jesus Christ are inseparable and indissoluble. They both operate at the same time and you cannot separate His deity from humanity. Furthermore, He told His disciples that His whole purpose for going to Jerusalem was to die and Luke tells us, "He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51)
2. Some have suggested that He was praying that He be delivered from premature physical death. However, since God is in complete control of every second of this, there was no premature moment to even pray about.
3. The most theologically solid answer to this question is that Jesus was overwhelmed with the ramifications of being made sin for us (II Corinthians 5:21), when He is completely Holy. To pay the price for our sins, it would mean He would have to be separated from the Father and received the full wrath of God. Sin, separation from the Father and recipient of God's wrath were things He had never ever experienced and this was the cup He wished could be removed. In fact, when Luke says "his sweat was like drops of blood" (Luke 22:44), this blood matter clearly connects to these issues.

Now John really zeroes in on Judas' betrayal.

There are a series of ten observations we want to make about this:

OBSERVATION #1 – Judas knew the very spot where Jesus and His disciples would be. **18:2**

Judas was a fraud. He had been one of the disciples, but not one the Father had given to the Son. Judas proves that one can hang around the most sacred of places and people and still be a phony. He was a secret thief; he was a false apostle; a son of perdition. Satan had entered Judas and he did not act in any weird observable way. He just secretly and quietly went about his diabolical mission. To betray Jesus Christ.

Judas-types pretend to know the Lord and they pretend to love the Lord. They pretend to love the teaching and the ministry but in their hearts it isn't real. A Judas is a phony. Neither is actually true.

OBSERVATION #2 – Judas brought Roman and Jewish leaders to take Jesus with lanterns, torches and weapons. **18:3**

John remembers this scene with pinpoint accuracy. He remembers seeing the Roman military, the Jewish officers and chief priests and the Pharisees. He also remembers the lanterns burning with their olive oil and the torches blazing on the end of poles and the weapons. According to Mark, they were armed with swords and clubs (Mark 14:48). He remembers the massive numbers. In fact, the word “cohort” could be used for up to 600 men. One old commentator said they were coming to get Jesus with half an army. This was a big, fully armed military battalion and they meant business. What you actually mathematically have here is all of these armed people coming to a garden to take one man from eleven guys.

These leaders are coming to get Jesus and they are completely prepared for conflict and combat. What they were not prepared for was His willing surrender.

OBSERVATION #3 – Jesus went and met all of those coming to get Him. **18:4**

Jesus knew what this was all about. He went right out to meet them. He wasn't intimidated or afraid of this group; what was about to happen to Him was the very reason He had come into this world.

OBSERVATION #4 – Jesus told them that He was the One they wanted. **18:5**

Jesus makes another “I Am” (εγω ειμι) statement of Deity. Just think about the humility of this moment - God is turning Himself over to the hands of sinful, finite men who want to kill Him.

OBSERVATION #5 – When Jesus told them who He was, they fell to the ground. **18:6**

Believe you me, this “I Am” statement resonated with this group. God slammed them to the ground. This is nothing more than an inward terror of being in the presence of the majesty of God. This is not your average Jewish man these people are talking to, they are talking to God and down they go. All 600 plus are on the ground. This is a supernatural work of God in that they are all on the ground before Jesus Christ. God could have dropped them all dead like flies.

If we remember that this Gospel is the last thing John wrote before He died, we may recall that when He saw Jesus Christ in His glory, he “fell at His feet as a dead man” (Revelation 1:17). As John wrote this and remembered this scene, He could not help but reflect on that moment.

Don’t think for a moment that someone is going to proudly and arrogantly go before Jesus Christ and tell Him a thing or two; they will be on their faces flat on the ground.

OBSERVATION #6 – Jesus asks them again who they want. **18:7**

Here again is something amazing. While they were on the ground, He could have just walked away. The reason He asks them again who they want is because He knows that they are to be a part of the process of getting Him on that cross. This is all the sovereign plan of God.

Isaiah predicted that He would be like a lamb led to slaughter (Isaiah 53:7). This group was part of leading Him to slaughter.

Notice who it is that is doing the questioning here, Him, not them. He is the One in charge they aren’t. They just got up off the ground. They should have said, we should worship this One, not arrest Him.

OBSERVATION #7 – Jesus tells them again that He is the One they want. **18:8a**

Notice again the willingness of Christ to identify Himself as the “I Am” (εγω ειμι). We have just come through an election in which one of the candidates has used this grammatical formula in making reference to himself. I have news for one who is so pompous and arrogant; one day he will be on his face before the true “I AM” and will see he was nothing but, as Isaiah said, a speck of dust.

OBSERVATION #8 – Jesus asks them to let His disciples go to fulfill prophecy. **18:8b-9**

Most believe that the reason Jesus identifies Himself as the One they are looking for is because to this point, Judas has not kissed him on the cheek. It is right about here when Judas steps forward and kisses Christ (Matthew 26:49) and when he does, some came and put their hands on Christ to take Him (Matthew 26:50).

Jesus is on His way to His own brutal suffering and crucifixion and He still is thinking about His own. He still cares for them.

OBSERVATION #9 – Peter pulls a sword and cuts off the right ear of Malchus. **18:10**

As soon as they laid their hands on Jesus, Peter pulled out his sword, which was a small type dagger, and he literally was prepared to die for the Lord just like he said (John 13:37). He swung the sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus, who was a servant of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas (John 18:13).

You have to like Peter here because he really doesn't have much of a chance. Actually this is a very brave move in view of the fact that they are surrounded and totally outnumbered. Peter was ready to fight, even though the odds weren't in their favor.

It is a good thing for us to remember that we cannot outfight or outnumber the world. We are surrounded and outnumbered by the world. Our ability to wage war and win is not found in ourselves physically, it is found in God spiritually. Our main weapons are the Word of God and prayer.

OBSERVATION #10 – Jesus tells Peter to stop because this was all part of the Father's plan.
18:11

There is a very important lesson to learn here; religious zeal must always be in the context of God's Truth or the zeal is wrong and will end up doing wrong things at wrong times.

This was not a personally pleasant cup, but it was a Divinely prepared cup.

I want every person here to understand this scene. This is all about us. Jesus Christ came to this world for the specific purpose of being lifted up on the cross and this is part of getting Him to that cross. The reason that He is lifted up is so that if any sinner will look to Him by faith He may be saved.