

Jesus is Arrested **(John 18:1-14)**

Jesus' path to the cross really began at the moment of His birth, and before that in the sovereign plan of God in eternity past. But that path took an intensive turn on the night before the crucifixion. Having delivered His Upper Room Discourse and prayed His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus left the Upper Room and led His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. Although John doesn't record Jesus' agonizing prayers in Gethsemane, we know that Jesus was fully aware that the hour of His sacrificial death was upon Him. In the peaceful setting of that garden Jesus was betrayed, arrested, and led away to His multiple trials and death. As we trace this path to the cross we must enter into the fullness of the meaning and emotion of these events. Sorrow, sadness, and sacrifice permeate the story. In the account of Jesus' arrest we're reminded that Jesus willingly obeyed the Father's will. He willingly surrendered His life for us.

Jesus didn't hide from His enemies— He offered Himself for our sins (18:1-3).

Through His prayerful encounter with God the Father, God the Son had prepared Himself for the ensuing nightmare of His sacrificial atonement.

Jesus took His disciples to a garden across the Kidron Valley (18:1).

The Upper Room was located within the city walls of Jerusalem. From that gathering place Jesus led His disciples down through the Kidron Valley to the slopes of the Mount of Olives. The word "valley" describes a waterway that would be filled during the rainy season and dry in the summer months, a wadi in today's terms. The waters of the Kidron Valley eventually made their way to the Dead Sea. Having taught His disciples and prayed to the Father, Jesus led His disciples out of Jerusalem to a garden east of Jerusalem, the Garden of Gethsemane.

Judas guided an arresting party to the place where Jesus frequently spent time with His disciples (18:2-3).

John indicates that Judas the betrayer knew about the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus often took His disciples there. We can easily imagine that a garden setting, probably shaded by olive trees, would have offered Jesus and His followers a peaceful respite from the busy activities of the day. Jesus would have frequented this place often during His travels to Jerusalem. It's significant that Jesus again returned to this garden. He didn't intend to hide from Judas or from the path that led to the cross. Because Judas was familiar with this place he easily guided a contingent of Roman soldiers to this place (the word for "detachment" or "band" refers specifically to a Roman cohort, a subset of a Roman legion). Joining this military detachment were servants of the chief priests and the Pharisees. John provides some additional eyewitness color to the event, mentioning the fact that the arresting party carried torches, lanterns, and weapons. The arresting party needed to arrest the right person without fear of escape, so they were equipped and armed for the task. This scene portrays an armed crowd besieging a

dangerous and elusive criminal. But Jesus wasn't elusive. He didn't hide His whereabouts, but made Himself readily available to fulfill His role as our redeemer.

**Jesus didn't deny His identity—
He openly declared His deity (18:4-9).**

Although Jesus wasn't elusive, He was powerful. He is God in the flesh. His inherent power is evident in what took place as the guards attempted to arrest Him. Jesus didn't deny His divine identity or power.

Jesus identified Himself to the arresting party and they all fell to the ground (18:4-6).

Jesus knew in advance what was going to take place. He knew "all" that was coming on Him. With boldness He went out to meet the arresting party and asked them who they wanted. "Jesus the Nazarene," they replied. Jesus openly identified Himself as the one they sought. But much more than His human identity is wrapped up in Jesus' response. "I am," He said. John points out that Judas the betrayer was standing among the arresting party, highlighting again his treachery and his role in identifying Jesus to the soldiers. But Jesus' simple reply, "I am," had a powerful effect on the arresting party. These soldiers and the representatives of the religious leaders immediately "went back" and "fell down on the ground." This reaction reveals that Jesus' words identified Him as deity, the great I Am of ancient times. Jesus is God. His words alone could paralyze an army. But Jesus didn't resist arrest. He offered Himself for our sins.

Jesus again identified Himself to the arresting party and secured the safety of His disciples (18:7-9).

Jesus again asked the arresting party whom they were seeking. They again answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." We can picture these hardened soldiers and the others cautiously rising to their feet. Jesus again answered, "I am." He then insisted, since they were looking only for Him, that they allow His disciples to go free. Having experienced the power of Jesus' words, the arresting party may have been more than eager to comply with Jesus' demand. John states that Jesus made this demand in order to fulfill His own prediction, "I have not lost one of those you gave me" (John 17:12). Having declared His identity and secured the safety of His disciples, Jesus was willing to be taken captive.

**Jesus didn't rely on force—
He accepted the Father's will (18:10-11).**

One disciple, Peter, made an effort to protect Jesus. While his intentions were laudable, his actions didn't fit Jesus' redemptive purpose.

Peter drew a sword and severed the ear of the High Priest's servant Malchus (18:10).

Simon Peter, an impetuous fisherman turned disciple of Jesus Christ, reacted as best he could to the threat to His master. Peter had in his possession a sword (compare Luke 22:38). Impulsively, Peter drew his sword and lashed out at the first target within reach, a servant of the high priest named Malchus. The fact that John alone includes Malchus' name indicates that John likely had some connection to the high priest's household staff. Peter, a fisherman, was apparently not skillful with a sword. Peter's inexperience coupled with the darkness and, possibly, Malchus' reflexive reaction landed the blow off center, merely severing the servant's ear. Luke 22:51 states that Jesus actually healed Malchus on the spot.

Jesus rebuked Peter and expressed His willingness to accept the Father's will (18:11).

Jesus told Peter to put his sword back in its sheath, an act of peace and surrender. Jesus didn't intend to resist arrest or to rely on force. Instead, Jesus fully intended to drink the cup that the Father had given Him. He would accept the Father's will and willingly give His life for our redemption.

**Jesus didn't resist arrest—
He submitted to the path of redemption (18:12-14).**

Jesus willingly submitted to arrest. He knew that He must walk the path of redemption.

The arresting party bound Jesus and took Him into custody (18:12).

Despite Peter's show of aggression, the disciples escaped unharmed. Matthew 26:56 says that at this point the disciples deserted Jesus and fled. Apparently the soldiers honored Jesus' demand not to harm His disciples and declined to give chase. They had been sent to arrest Jesus and Jesus alone. The arresting party—the Roman soldiers and the servants of the Jewish leaders—under the leadership of the Roman military commander (the Greek term refers to him as the leader of one thousand soldiers, although the number of soldiers present at Jesus' arrest must have been much smaller) arrested and bound Jesus. They had secured their prize. Jesus, who by a spoken word could have immobilized this mob, submitted to arrest and thereby submitted to the Father's will.

The arresting party presented Jesus to the former High Priest named Annas (18:13-14).

In those early morning hours the arresting party, probably by prearranged orders, took Jesus to the house of Annas, a former high priest and the father-in-law of the current high priest, Caiaphas. Within the complex politics of the Roman and Jewish balance of power, the Romans retained the authority to appoint high priests. Annas had served in that capacity many years earlier, but for several years Caiaphas had held that office. It was Caiaphas who had previously stated that it was expedient that one man die on behalf of the Jewish people (John 11:49-50). Caiaphas likely meant that killing one man in order to maintain peace with Rome was better than allowing a rebellion to occur. But his words had a broader application according to John 11:51-52. John saw in these words the sacrificial death of Jesus on behalf of the whole world. Jesus would endure multiple trials before His crucifixion, the first of which would take place in the

home of Annas. Jesus had submitted Himself to the path of redemption. He willingly obeyed the Father's will. He willingly surrendered His life for us.