

John 18:1-12

Introduction

This morning we come to Jesus' betrayal and arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. The "hour" that's been anticipated since the beginning of this Gospel is finally here. The eternal Word who "was God" and who was "with God" *became flesh* (1:14) so that He might suffer and die as one of us, in our place. From our vantage point, we've been able to read John and see this "hour" anticipated on every page. And so what we come to this morning is really the beginning of the denouement of John. The "denouement" is "the final part of a... narrative in which the strands of the plot are drawn together and matters are explained or resolved"; it's "the climax of a chain of events, usually when something is... made clear." It's only in the light of Jesus' sufferings and death that all of John's Gospel to this point can be finally and fully understood. Here is the denouement of John; and, in a very real sense, of all of redemptive history.

I. John 18:1a — When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples to the other side of the brook Kidron...

The account of Jesus' betrayal and arrest is included in all four Gospels, but John tells the story in his own way—leaving out some parts that the other Gospels include, and including other things that Matthew, Mark, and Luke leave out. Only John tells us that "Jesus went out with His disciples to the other side of the brook Kidron."

At one level, this is just a geographical note appropriate to an account of something that takes place in real history – in real space and time [see picture on page 8]. The Greek word for "brook" actually refers to a "winter torrent." So the more technically correct translation would be the "Wadi Kidron." A wadi is a water channel that's dry except in the rainy season. Since the rainy season in Israel is from October to April, and since the time now is the end of the rainy season (March/April), it's likely there was water in the channel when Jesus crossed with His disciples. At one level, this is just a geographical note appropriate to something that happened in real history. But could there also be a deeper level of significance?

In the Old Testament, the brook Kidron marked the territory *outside of Jerusalem*. When Josiah was cleansing the temple:

- 2 Kings 23:6 — He brought out the Asherah from the house of the LORD *outside Jerusalem* to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron.

Two verses earlier, we're told that Josiah burned the vessels associated with idol worship "outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron" (1 Kings 23:4; cf. 23:12). Hezekiah "removed the [idolatrous] altars which were in Jerusalem... and cast them into the brook Kidron" (2 Chron. 30:13-14; cf. 29:16). Asa did the same (2 Chron. 15:16). We read in Jeremiah:

- Jeremiah 31:38–40 — "Behold, days are coming," declares Yahweh, "when the city will be rebuilt for Yahweh... And the whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes [the valley of Hinnom to the south of Jerusalem], and all the fields as far as the brook Kidron [the valley of

Hinnom runs into the brook Kidron at the south-east corner of Jerusalem], [north] to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be holy to Yahweh.”

The point here is that even the territory immediately outside of Jerusalem which had been defiled with dead bodies and was the place where idolatrous objects were cast—even this area would be holy to the Lord.

There are only two other places in the Old Testament where the “brook Kidron” is referred to by name. The author of Kings tells us what happened to a man named Shimei when Solomon became king:

- 1 Kings 2:36–37 — Then the king sent and called for Shimei and said to him, “Build for yourself a house in Jerusalem and live there, and do not go out from there to any place. Now it will be on the day you *go out* and cross over the brook Kidron, that you will know for certain that you shall surely die.”

The brook Kidron ran only along the east side of Jerusalem. Why, then, when Solomon was warning Shimei not to leave the city in *whatever* direction, did he specifically say, “on the day you go out and cross over the brook Kidron”? I think this is a reminder of *why* Solomon is passing this sentence on Shimei. The guilt of Shimei was that he had cursed Solomon’s father, David, when he was fleeing the city of Jerusalem because of his son Absalom’s conspiracy (2 Sam. 16:5-13). And which direction was David fleeing when Shimei cursed him?

- 2 Samuel 15:16–17, 23 — So the king **went out** [of the city; *exelthen*; see Lange and Keil] and all his household with him... And the king **went out** [of the city; *exelthen*] and all the people with him... While all the country was weeping with a loud voice, all the people passed over. The king also passed over the **brook Kidron** [*cheimarroun Kedron*], and all the people passed over toward the way of the wilderness [in the Septuagint, the “brook Kidron” is referenced twice].

Matthew says, “Then Jesus came... to a place called Gethsemane” (Mat. 26:36; cf. Mk. 14:32). Luke says, “And coming out, He went as was His custom to the Mount of Olives” (Lk. 22:39). *John* mentions neither Gethsemane nor the Mount of Olives, but says: “He **went out** [of the city; *exelthen*] with His disciples *to the other side of the brook Kidron* [*cheimarroun Kedron*].” In light of all the Old Testament background, might there be more here than just a geographical reference to crossing a watercourse?

David, we know, is a type (Gr. *typos*) of Christ. Jesus takes the prayers of David on His own lips and sees that they’re fulfilled in Himself. The Apostles see the experiences of the royal psalmist fulfilled in the experiences of His greater royal Son, Jesus. The innocent sufferings of David are fulfilled in the innocent sufferings of His greater Son. The vindication and triumphs of David are fulfilled in the vindication and triumphs of His greater Son. It’s this established typological relationship between David and Jesus that allows us to ask if there isn’t also a divinely intended typological connection between David’s “going out” from the city of Jerusalem and crossing of the brook Kidron and Jesus’ “going out” from the city of Jerusalem and crossing of the brook Kidron one thousand years later.

David was fleeing the city because his own son was seeking his life (cf. 2 Sam. 15:14). The circumstances of Jesus mirror those of David. Jesus' own people have rejected Him. The Jews, themselves, are seeking His life (cf. Jn. 1:11). But unlike David, Jesus isn't fleeing. David's greater Son "went out" from the city not to escape, but rather to meet His betrayer and hand Himself over to those who would bind Him.

As David was fleeing, he was informed that his own trusted counselor, Ahithophel, had betrayed him and was among the conspirators with Absalom (2 Sam. 15:12, 31). Maybe this is what David was referring to in Psalm forty-one:

- Psalm 41:9 — Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

When David heard of Ahithophel's betrayal, he said, "O Yahweh, I pray, make the counsel of Ahithophel foolishness" (2 Sam. 15:31). Once again, the circumstances of Jesus mirror those of David. Jesus is being betrayed by one of His own disciples. So Jesus said to His disciples in John chapter 13:

- John 13:18 — "I do not speak about all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME'" [Ps. 41].

We see the parallels, and yet the parallels also highlight the differences. Unlike David, his greater Son didn't need to be informed of Judas' betrayal. He knew who would betray Him from the beginning (Jn. 6:64). And unlike David, his greater Son didn't pray that God would thwart the designs of His betrayer; instead, He told Judas to do what he did quickly (Jn. 13:27) and later went out purposefully to meet him.

Ahithophel was the betrayer of David, but when he saw that his conspiracy would fail:

- 2 Samuel 17:23 — He saddled his donkey and arose and went to his home, to his city, and set his house in order, and hung [*apancho*] himself.

Judas was the betrayer of Jesus, but when he saw that his conspiracy was succeeding:

- Matthew 27:3-5 — He felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood" ... And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hung [*apancho*] himself.

Ahithophel hung himself, believing David would live and triumph – and he was right. Judas hung himself, believing that a misguided Jesus was ruined and defeated – but he was wrong.

When David gave Ittai the Gittite, who was "a foreigner and... an exile," the freedom to "return to [his] own place" and even encouraged him to do so (2 Sam. 15:19-20):

- 2 Samuel 15:21 — Ittai answered the king and said, “As Yahweh lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be.”

David’s greater Son received similar vows of loyalty from His disciples on the night of His betrayal:

- John 13:37 — Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You [“all the disciples said the same thing too”; Mat. 26:35].”

But in the end, while David could depend on Ittai the Gittite, who was faithful, the disciples of Jesus—his greater Son—all left Him and fled (Mk. 14:50).

It was when David was descending the further (eastern) slope of the Mount of Olives that Shimei came out and was “cursing continually”:

- 2 Samuel 16:7–8 — “Get out, get out, you man of bloodshed, and vile fellow! **Yahweh** has returned upon you all the bloodshed of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and **Yahweh** has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. And behold, you are taken in your own evil...”

Shimei mocked David, saying that he had been rejected by God for his own sin — that he had come to the throne illegitimately and was therefore not the rightful king of Israel. David’s greater Son, Jesus, received the same treatment while He was hanging on the cross (cf. Isa. 53:3-4):

- Matthew 27:39–43 — Those passing by were blaspheming Him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who are going to destroy the sanctuary and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. **“HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM;** for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

While Shimei was cursing David, one of David’s mighty men, Abishai the son of Zeruiah, said to the king:

- 2 Samuel 16:9 — “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me pass over now and remove his head.”

But David answered:

- 2 Samuel 16:10–12 — “What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah? If he curses, and if Yahweh has told him, ‘Curse David,’ then who shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’... **Let him alone and let him curse, for Yahweh has told him.**”

One thousand years later, on the other side of the Mount of Olives, a disciple named Peter defended David's greater Son by drawing his sword and striking the servant of the high priest (Jn. 18:10). But Jesus said to Peter:

- John 18:11 (cf. Mat. 26:51-54) — “Put the sword into the sheath; **the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?**”

Just like David submitted himself to the will of God, so does Jesus. But unlike David, the cup that the Father has given David's greater Son to drink is infinitely more bitter.

David was in one sense a righteous sufferer. He was righteous not because he was without sin. It was because of David's adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah that he was suffering these consequences. The Lord had said to David through the prophet Nathan:

- 2 Samuel 12:10–11 — “The sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife... Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household.”

David was righteous not because he was without sin, but because he confessed and acknowledged his sin (2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 51; cf. Ps. 38:16-22; 41:4-12). It was only as a righteous sufferer that David could entrust himself to the one who judges righteously:

- 2 Samuel 16:12 — “Perhaps Yahweh will look on my affliction and return good to me instead of [Shimei's] cursing this day.”

And so we see again that David is a type of Jesus, who was the ultimate righteous sufferer. David's greater Son was righteous not because He confessed His sin, but because He was without sin. And yet David's greater Son suffered not just exile from Jerusalem and the threat of a temporal death, but even the full curse of the Law that our sins deserved. It was only as the ultimate righteous sufferer that Jesus could entrust himself to the one who judges righteously.

- 1 Peter 2:22–24 — [Christ] COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; who being reviled, did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree.

David's crossing of the brook Kidron as he fled from Absalom his son is taken up and fulfilled in Jesus' crossing of the brook Kidron on the night of His betrayal. We see the parallels, and yet the parallels also highlight the differences. It's the *fulfillment* that brings into clearer focus how Jesus truly is David's *greater Son* (cf. Ps. 110 & Mat. 22:41-45). So now we pick up again in John chapter eighteen:

II. John 18:1 — When Jesus had spoken these words, He *went out* with His disciples *to the other side of the brook Kidron*, where there was a garden, into which He entered with His disciples.

Matthew and Mark tell us that this garden was called Gethsemane — a name that means “olive press.” Likely, then, this was an olive orchard with a stone mill on site for grinding and crushing the olives as well as other equipment for pressing and separating. The fact that Jesus “entered into” this garden [*eiselthen*] and later “went out” of it [*exelthen*; v. 4] tells us that it would have been a walled enclosure.

III. John 18:2–3 — Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often gathered there with His disciples [this was a place of private retreat probably made available by a disciple of Jesus (not one of the twelve)]. 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 doesn’t mention the agony of Jesus and His prayers in the garden or His exhortations to Peter, and James, and himself when they were unable to stay awake. He’s not hiding these things. He’s just including only those things that emphasize Jesus’ sovereign authority and control over all that happens.

Why did the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees come with lanterns and torches when it was a full moon that night (cf. the time of Passover)? Maybe it was cloudy, but just as likely they knew they would be entering the darker night of a walled enclosure full of trees. Maybe they wanted to quickly flush Jesus out of hiding and keep Him from escaping over the wall. They also brought weapons in the event that once He was found and cornered there might be violent resistance. But in the end, the lanterns and torches and weapons were all unnecessary. John tells us what the other Gospel writers don’t:

IV. John 18:4–6 — So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, *went out* [of the garden; *exelthen*] and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” They answered Him, “Jesus the Nazarene.” [Likely it was at this point that Judas kissed Jesus, though John doesn’t record it.] He said to them, “I am He.” And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. So when He said to them, “I am He,” they drew back and fell to the ground.

John leaves out the kiss of Judas because even this kiss was unnecessary in light of the sovereign self-identification of Jesus. That Jesus “went out” of the city *to meet His betrayer* can be seen when John says that Jesus “went out” of the garden and said to those who had come to arrest Him: “Whom do you seek?” When they answered, “Jesus the Nazarene,” Jesus said, “I am He.” He’s not *just* identifying Himself as the one they’re looking for. At a deeper level, He’s identifying Himself as the one who *is* who He says He is – not just the Nazarene, but the revelation of the Father; God incarnate (see sermons on John 8:12-29 and John 8:48-59). There was no theophany, here. There was no sudden unveiling of His glory or thundering voice from heaven. The Jesus who says, “I am He,” *is* the Nazarene — the same Jesus who just a few minutes earlier was falling to His knees in a great agony of distress (cf. Lk. 22:44). And yet the unexpected sight of Jesus coming out to meet them, and His unexpected questioning, and the unexpected power and authority of His self-identification so unnerved and overwhelmed those who had come to arrest Jesus that “they drew back and fell to the ground.”

V. John 18:7-9 — Therefore He again asked them, “Whom do you seek?” And they said, “Jesus the Nazarene.” Jesus answered, “I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way,” in order that the word which He spoke would be fulfilled, “Of those whom You have given Me, I lost not one.”

John doesn't tell us that the disciples all left Jesus and fled (Mat. 26:56; Mk. 14:50). He tells us only how Jesus commanded those who had come to arrest Him to let His disciples go their way. It's in the hour of His suffering that we see as clearly as anywhere else the sovereign authority of Jesus. It's in the hour of His suffering that we see His power to guard and preserve His disciples. Because they still couldn't understand, He knew they weren't yet ready to face the ultimate test. This is made clear in what happens next.

VI. John 18:10-11 — 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?” [Cf. Ps. 75:8; Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15; Ezek. 23:31-33)

On the night of His betrayal and arrest, the only commands are issued by Jesus. “Let these go their way” — in order that He might lose not one of those whom the Father had given Him. “Put the sword into the sheath” — in order that He might drink the cup that the Father has given Him to drink.

VII. John 18:12 — So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him...

David, the righteous sufferer, “went out” from Jerusalem and crossed the brook Kidron, fleeing. David's greater Son, the ultimate righteous sufferer, “went out” from Jerusalem and crossed the brook Kidron *not* fleeing, but as the only one that night who was truly in control.

And yet this sovereign authority of Jesus was all in the service of His obedient submission to the Father's will. It's this sovereign authority of Jesus that will direct His steps all the way to the cross.

Who else ever lived and died like Jesus lived and died? He is the one before whom we bow down and worship. He is the one we love. How, then, should we live?



19th century painting of Jerusalem and the Kidron Valley viewed from the Mount of Olives.



Present day view of Jerusalem and the Kidron Valley from the Mount of Olives (the western side of the ravine is terraced).