

Good Friday

Jesus on Trial: The Arrest

John 18:1-9

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Scripture

Last year I began what I plan to be a seven-year series of messages. It is based on the book by James Montgomery Boice and Philip Graham Ryken that is titled, *Jesus on Trial*.¹ My goal is to teach on seven important aspects of the trial of Jesus Christ: the diabolical *conspiracy* to kill him (which I covered last year); his night-time *arrest* in the Garden of Gethsemane; the short *resistance* that the disciples mounted in his defense; the *witnesses* who accused him of blasphemy during his ecclesiastical trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin; the *verdict* reached in his civil trial by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate; the *sentence* of death that his enemies demanded; and his *execution* by crucifixion.

Let us read John 18:1-9:

¹ When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. ² Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. ³ So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴ Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” ⁵ They answered him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I am he.” Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶ When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷ So he asked them again, “Whom do you seek?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” ⁸ Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go.” ⁹ This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: “Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one.” (John 18:1-9)

¹ James Montgomery Boice & Philip Graham Ryken, *Jesus on Trial* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002).

Introduction

“Jesus Arrested!” That could have been the headline of *The Jerusalem Post* on the morning of 14 Nissan, 30 AD. The report would have indicated that Jesus had been arrested the evening before in the Garden of Gethsemane. A large band of soldiers had managed to arrest Jesus without too much commotion.

Review

If you had been privy to what was going on behind the scenes, you would have been aware that it all began with a conspiracy. The religious leaders and the political leaders had conspired together to get rid of Jesus. But they were having great difficulty doing so because of Jesus’ immense popularity with the people. However, a stunning development took place when one of Jesus’ own inner circle of friends stepped forward to betray him to the authorities. Judas Iscariot volunteered to betray Jesus for some unknown reason.

Lesson

Tonight, I would like to examine briefly the arrest behind the death of Jesus Christ.

I. The Confrontation in Gethsemane (18:1-3)

First, let’s look at the confrontation in Gethsemane.

Jesus and his disciples had just finished the last supper in the upper room in Jerusalem. Earlier in the evening Judas had left the meeting to go and talk to the authorities.

A. *Jesus and the Eleven Go to Gethsemane (18:1-2)*

First, notice that Jesus and the eleven go to Gethsemane.

1. The Place of Their Going

First, the place of their going.

John 18:1 says that **when Jesus had spoken these words**, that is, after Jesus had finished praying his High Priestly Prayer, **he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered**. The place of their going was the garden known as Gethsemane.

2. The Time of Their Going

Second, the time of their going.

Since this was after they had eaten and Jesus had spoken to his disciples, the time of their going was very late at night, perhaps around midnight. After Jesus and the disciples arrived in the garden, Jesus went off alone to pray, as was his custom. Some time later he came back to the disciples and found them asleep.

3. The Reason for Their Going

And third, the reason for the going.

John noted that **Jesus often met there with his disciples** (18:2b). He went there to teach them, and also to pray.

B. Judas and the Mob Go to Gethsemane (18:3)

Second, notice that Judas and the mob go to Gethsemane.

1. The Members of the Group

First, the members of the group.

Now Judas, who betrayed Jesus, also knew the place (18:2a). He had been with Jesus and the other disciples on previous occasions, and he knew exactly where Jesus would be.

So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees (18:3a), went to the garden. According to the gospels, there was a large crowd who came to arrest Jesus. The **officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees** were the temple police, and they were the primary arresting officers. The **band of soldiers** was merely there to provide protection and to physically secure the arrest of Jesus.

2. The Time of Their Arrival

Second, the time of their arrival.

Since Judas and the mob **went there with lanterns and torches (18:3b)**, it was still in the middle of the night.

3. The Purpose for Their Coming

And third, the purpose for their coming.

Judas and the mob also went to the garden with **weapons (18:3b)**. They went with the clear intention of arresting Jesus.

II. The Revelation of Jesus (18:4-9)

Second, let's look at the revelation of Jesus.

Jesus reveals himself in a wonderful way as a prophet, king, and priest during his arrest.

A. *Jesus Reveals Himself As a Prophet (18:4)*

First, notice that Jesus reveals himself as a prophet.

John 18:4 says: **“Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’”**

Jesus was fully aware of **all that would happen to him**. He knew that he had come into the world to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). He knew that he had come to die.

It is important to note that Jesus was fully in control of the situation. He was not the helpless victim of circumstances beyond his control. No. Jesus was in sovereign control of all that was taking place at that moment.

B. Jesus Reveals Himself As a King (18:5-6)

Second, notice that Jesus reveals himself as a king.

When asked, “Whom do you seek?” **they answered him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I am he”** (18:5a). John notes that **Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them** (18:5b). **When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground** (18:6).

Now, the question needs to be asked about why **they drew back and fell to the ground**. What produced this strange reaction? They were armed and Jesus was unarmed. How could mere words be powerful enough to knock them down to the ground? Obviously, there must be more to this than meets the eye.

The original Greek of the New Testament helps us understand what really happened. Our English text has Jesus answering, **“I am he”** in both verses 5 and 6. But, in the Greek, Jesus simply answered, “I am” (*ego eimi*), quoting two little words from one of the most important episodes in the Old Testament. The words “I am” first appear in Exodus 3, the story of Moses and the burning bush. Moses was tending his sheep near Horeb, the mountain of God, when he saw a strange sight: a burning bush that was not being consumed by the fire. As he investigated, Moses encountered the holy God. When Moses asked to whom he was speaking, God simply said, “I am who I am” (Exodus 3:14). From that time forward, the mysterious name “I am” became the special name that the Jews used for the God of Israel. It is a form of the Hebrew verb “to be.” It means that God has no past and no future, only an eternal present. He is who he is; he has always been who he is; and he will always be who he is.

When Jesus confronted the mob, saying, “I am,” he was quot-

ing God's words to Moses. By doing so, he claimed to be the eternal God, personally appropriating the unique divine name of the Lord God of Israel. Jesus used that special name with such authority that for a moment his enemies were driven back in terror.

Here we encounter the paradox of the incarnation. Even at a moment of apparent weakness, when Jesus seems to be a defenseless victim at the mercy of dangerous men, he is still the Lord of glory and the King of kings. He is the great I AM.

C. Jesus Reveals Himself As a Priest (18:7-9)

And third, notice that Jesus reveals himself as a priest.

The arresting mob lay on the ground until Jesus **asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one"** (18:7-9).

Jesus made sure that the disciples would be safe. Like a priest, he interceded on their behalf. Of course, the mob was only interested in Jesus, but they would have had no problem taking out the disciples to accomplish their mission. However, Jesus ensures that his own are protected in every dangerous circumstance. That should encourage every child of God.

Conclusion

As we contemplate the arrest of Jesus, let us remember that Jesus is indeed a prophet, king, and priest. He is a prophet in that he knew all that would happen to him. He is a king in that he is the great I AM. And he is a priest in that of those whom the Father gave him he will not lose one.

Let us give thanks to God for all that Jesus did to secure our salvation. Amen.

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equip them for their **ministry** in the church
and life **mission** in the world,
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

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