

# No One Takes My Life From Me

## PART 14 - ARREST

TEXT: JOHN 18:1-11 (ESV)

### Late Thursday

The Thursday prior to Jesus' crucifixion fills many pages in the Gospel narratives. It begins with John and Peter securing the upper room. In that room, Jesus washes His disciples' feet, explaining He was there to make them clean. As they begin to eat, Jesus announces one of them is about to betray Him. Each wonders if He means them. Then He dispatches Judas to do what he intends. During that meal, Jesus sets apart the Passover bread and cup and reassigns—or better, perfects their meaning. The bread is His Body. The cup is His blood. This meal would no longer primarily remind them of God's

deliverance from the external tyranny of Pharaoh, but rather from the internal tyranny of their own guilt and sin against God. Then Jesus prayed for these His friends and those who'd come to know Christ through them—that the Lord would make them one. <sup>(Jn 17)</sup> Then they left for the Mount of Olives. He parted with most of His disciples here, taking only Peter, James and John into the Garden to pray. <sup>(Mk 14:33)</sup> But He isn't there only to pray. He is also there to wait. Soon a line of torches snake their way toward Him in the darkness. This is what He's waiting for.

This sermon is about trusting Christ when you don't understand what He's doing. There have been many places in this series where we've seen Jesus uphold His claim that no one would take His life from Him. But today's moment in Gethsemane is a proof text. Here He surrenders His freedom, accepting His Father's will to go to the cross. He enters this garden leading His disciples and leaves following His captors, in whose custody He'll remain until He dies on the cross less than 15 hours later. Hear to how John tells the story of Jesus' arrest.

### John 18:1-12

<sup>1</sup>When he finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it. <sup>2</sup>Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. <sup>3</sup>So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

<sup>4</sup>Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?" <sup>5</sup>"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) <sup>6</sup>When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup>Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." <sup>8</sup>"I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go." <sup>9</sup>This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

<sup>10</sup>Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) <sup>11</sup>Jesus commanded Peter, "Put away your sword! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" <sup>12</sup>So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.

### Lanterns, Weapons & Torches

Imagine you are in your friend's home. The hour is late. There's a knock on the door. As you move to the door, you see red and blue pulses lighting up the living room walls. Is there a fire? Police? Then you hear your friend's name called, loudly and sternly from a man whose delivery has made it plain that you'd better not try his patience. When you open the door, you discover six police cars in the lawn and guns are trained on your friend as three red laser dots dance across his chest. Just moments ago, you were dining together. Yeah, you knew your friend wasn't entirely himself. But now, guns are drawn as large men in body armor close in barking orders, telling you to get on the ground. It has escalated just this quickly.

One minute Jesus is praying in Gethsemane; the next minute a friend appears with a detachment of soldiers carrying torches and **weapons**. They had come to arrest Jesus. Who were these men in the arresting party? Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, was leading the band. He had agreed to hand Jesus over to the Temple authorities for 30 pieces of silver—4 months wages.

With Judas are a detachment of Roman soldiers. There were hundreds of them in Jerusalem at the time. We're not told how many were with Judas, but enough that their band included a commanding officer—a captain. <sup>(Jn 18:12)</sup> Along with the Roman soldiers were also Jewish temple police sent by the Chief Priests. So get the picture. The arresting party consisted of Roman soldiers, Jewish police and one of Jesus' own disciples. They were many and they were armed. They were not here to argue. They were here to bring Jesus into custody without incident. The one Judas kisses is the one they want. <sup>(Lk 22:47-48)</sup> The big men in body armor are ready to secure their objective.

### And They Fell to the Ground

Why would Jesus choose to head to Gethsemane after the Last Supper? Luke tells us "it was His custom" <sup>(Lk 22:39)</sup> to go here at night, suggesting Jesus and His disciples may have been meeting here regularly throughout the week. If this was a predictable place to find Jesus, why would He go there? So He could rendezvous with His disciples, and one of them in particular—Judas. Jesus left the bustle and crowds of Jerusalem and headed to this quiet parcel of land on the outskirts of town to wait for Judas, and to wait in a place that would be easy for Judas to find.

How do we know He was here to wait for Judas? We see it in how He engages with His captors. In an unexpected twist, John says as the arresting party drew near, "Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to Him, went out and asked them, 'Who is it that you want?'" He didn't wait for them to find Him. Rather, He presented Himself to them. But as John continues, Jesus' arrest was far from "without incident." He had posed a question, and His response to their answer would shake them to their core.



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When they said they were seeking “Jesus of Nazareth,” He said, literally, “**I AM,**” using the name God provided Moses when Moses asked who He was—“**I AM.**” (Ex 3:14) We might be tempted to think this was just a clever word choice until we see the response of the arresting party. John says they drew back and fell to the ground when Jesus said “**I Am.**” Why? The soldiers knew little of Jesus and certainly didn’t admire Him as a person, let alone as the Savior, so they didn’t fall back out of respect, as some have argued. I believe the power of the name of God from the lips of the Son of God caused them to buckle.

John, throughout His gospel, makes a point of highlighting places where Jesus uses the Divine Name, referring to Himself, as evidence of His divinity. (Jn 6:35, 41, 45-48; 8:12, 9:5; 10:7-9; 10:11,14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1,5) But this isn’t just a literary device. When the soldiers ask for Jesus of Nazareth and He says, “**I am,**” they are all unable to stand. He uses this name to reveal His divinity, which throughout Scripture is often followed by those listening falling to the ground. (cf. Ezek 1:28, Dan 2:46, Acts 9:4, Rev 19:10) (You have to wonder what went through Judas’ mind as he later dusted himself off.)

As the guards wilt at the power of a word, Jesus persists, asking again as they pick themselves up off the ground, “*Who do you seek?*” They reply from the dust, “*Jesus of Nazareth.*” He says, “*I told you that I am He.*” I ask you, who was there in greater force, Jesus on His own or the entire band of soldiers and temple police with their torches and weapons? If Jesus, with a word, could level them, then we’re left to understand that just as no one took His life from Him on the cross, no one took His freedom here in the garden either. Though the arresting party were many in number, they were no match for the One they’d come to apprehend. But He wasn’t there to resist. It was time.

While all this was going on, however, there was still the matter of Jesus’ disciples’ safety. Back then, if an alleged revolutionary was captured, it wasn’t uncommon to jail his followers as well. Jesus heads this off early. In asking His captors who they sought, He narrowed their focus. If they had originally come to arrest Jesus and those with Him, He had now stepped between His disciples and the soldiers, inviting the guards to verbalize they were really just seeking Jesus. With that spoken, Jesus intercedes for His friends, “*I’m all yours, but let my disciples go.*”

Here, John says this wasn’t just a lucky break. This was the fulfillment of a prayer Jesus prayed only moments earlier in the Upper Room: “*While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction.*” (Jn 17:12) This moment in the garden was a living parable of what Christ would do for His people spiritually. He had come to preserve them from death, and we see the beautiful language of redemption as He equates for us His preserving grace as a **keeping**. To be a Christian is to be one who is being kept by Christ. Whatever was originally going to happen, the disciples got away clean.

## The Sword and the Point

But Peter was slow to grasp just how “in control” his Lord truly was. Caught in the moment, Peter drew his sword and attacked one of the guards. The guard tried to duck, and Peter ended up cutting off his right ear. His name was Malchus. I love this detail. All we know of this man is his name and what Peter did to him, and how Jesus healed him. This moment could have gone horribly wrong. Peter surprises everyone with this attack. Everyone tenses up. Everyone with a sword instinctively grabs the hilt, and prepares to draw. And just then, Jesus jumps into the middle, yelling, “*Stop! Peter, put away your sword!*”

Then, from His own lips come the words which bring clarity to the moment. He says, “*Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?*” Just moments before He prayed to the Father, “*If you are willing, remove this cup from me. But not my will but yours be done.*” (Lk 22:43) The Father sent an angel to strengthen Him as He continued to agonize in prayer. The angel’s presence was evidence that God would not remove this cup from Him. Jesus would drink the cup of God’s wrath toward the sins of the world. This was His Father’s will and no one, not an angel from heaven and certainly not Peter, would prevent Jesus from accepting this cup. No man brought this cup to Him. God did.

Jesus is tied up and led away. But we must remember that although Jesus submits to this arrest, He is submitting to something far greater—the cup that the Father had given Him. It is the cup of the wrath of God poured out over the sin of man. And He accepts it. From the location of His arrest, to offering His cheek to Judas’ kiss, to presenting Himself to the soldiers, to letting them pick themselves up off the ground to stand before His Holy presence and even dare to bind His wrists, to disrupting of Peter’s attempted coup and healing poor Malchus, Jesus not only yields to His arrest. In many ways, He facilitates it. As He does, we learn some things about Christ.

## Shall I Not Drink the Cup?

Are you in your own Gethsemane right now, unsure about the wisdom of God’s apparent active or inactive work in your life? Are you trying to sustain the fragile image of a reality you’d like to live in, but know in your heart is mostly a complex set of smoke and mirrors? What cup has life handed you to drink? Is it too much for you? Some of us can’t make sense of why things are the way they are. And we’re not sure we can really trust Christ right now—not with the details of our lives. I think of Peter with the blood on His sword, or Judas on the ground at the power of a word. They both had their reasons for being there. Judas hoped to end Christ’s ministry. Peter hoped to protect Jesus from death. But neither would get what they wanted because neither wanted what God had for His Son.

You may feel the walls closing in around you right now. Most of us are very private about this. If this is you, please hear the truth of Christ again. In offering up His life, He steps between you and your ruin. Pastor James Boice said it like this: “*Jesus shows us His effective, persevering grace with us by lifting us from the darkness of this world into His own marvelous light, by interceding for us in heaven,*<sup>(Heb 7:25)</sup> *by guarding our spiritual deposits,*<sup>(2 Tim 1:12)</sup> *by seeing us through temptation,*<sup>(Heb 2:18)</sup> *by saving even our bodies at the time of the last resurrection*<sup>(Phil 3:20-21)</sup> *and by bringing us at last and without blemish into the presence of His own and the Father’s glory.*<sup>(Jude 24-25)</sup> *He does this all by placing Himself between us and our enemies.*” This is what He did in the Garden.

If you trust Him to represent you before God—if you believe you did need Him to take upon Himself the cup of God’s wrath toward your sin, know His intercession didn’t end merely in His arrest, but in His going through with every part of God’s will for this saving work. As Peter would later write, “*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*” (1 Pet 2:24)

If He died that you might live eternally, is He not also then Lord of your life now? And is He not good? The Apostle Paul wrote, “*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*” (Rom 8:32) We see in the garden that Christ gives us what we need, whether we understand it or not. He has proven you can trust Him.