



JOHN 18

I AM HE

The arrest of Jesus marks the transition from His earthly ministry to His sacrifice and final payment for the sins of all mankind. And right at this moment of transition, Jesus proclaims "I am," reaffirming His deity, and sending the soldiers to the ground. This miraculous moment makes it crystal clear that Jesus went willingly into their hands, in order to fulfill His mission. -JT

1 When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

2 Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. **3** So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

4 Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?" **5** "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) **6** When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

7 Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they said. **8** Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go." **9** This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

10 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.) **11** Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

12 Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him **13** and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. **14** Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

15 Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, **16** but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

17 "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" she asked Peter. He replied, "I am not." **18** It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

19 Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. **20** "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. **21** Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."

22 When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded. **23** "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" **24** Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

25 Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not."

26 One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" **27** Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

28 Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness they did not enter the palace, because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. **29** So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

30 "If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you." **31** Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." "But we have no right to execute anyone," they objected. **32** This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

33 Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" **34** "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

35 "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" **36** Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." **38** "What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. **39** But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?"

40 They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

Study Notes BlueLetterBible.org Commentary

And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place: "It is plain that, having consecrated himself for the impending sacrifice, he now made no attempt to hide from his enemies, but went to the place where Judas would normally expect to find him." (Bruce)

Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops: Judas came to the garden with team of soldiers to seize and arrest Jesus. He led both a detachment of troops (a large number of Roman soldiers), and officers from the temple security force. Why they came with such force is not directly answered; the religious leaders or the Romans must have expected or feared some kind of battle or conflict.

Whom are you seeking: Taking the lead, Jesus said this for at least two reasons. He wanted any potential violence to be directed to Him and not to His disciples, so He wanted to identify Himself. Jesus also wanted Judas and the detachment of troops to announce their evil intention.

I am: Jesus answered them with this curious phrase, two words in both English and in the original language (ego eimi). It is curious because Jesus didn't say I am He, but simply I am — the He was added by the translators and is not in the original text. With this Jesus consciously proclaimed that He was God, connecting His words to the many previous I am statements recorded in the Gospel of John, especially in John 8:58 (but also John 6:48, 8:12, 9:5, 10:9, 10:11-14, 10:36, 11:25, 14:6).

Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground: When Jesus declared His divine identity (in the words I am), Judas and soldiers all fell back. There was such a display of divine presence, majesty, and power in those two words that the enemies of Jesus were powerless to stand against Him.

"Here our Saviour let out a little beam of the majesty of his Deity, and 500 men fell before him." (Trapp)

"Our Lord chose to give them this proof of his infinite power, that they might know that their power could not prevail against him if he chose to exert his might, seeing that the very breath of his mouth confounded, drove back, and struck them down to the earth." (Clarke)

"HERE OUR SAVIOUR LET OUT A LITTLE BEAM OF THE MAJESTY OF HIS DEITY, AND 500 MEN FELL BEFORE HIM."

- TRAPP

Simon Peter, having a sword: The disciples apparently sometimes carried swords, and Luke 22:38 indicates that they had at least two on this occasion. Having a sword made sense when there were robbers and violent men to consider.

Drew it and struck the high priest's servant: Each of the other Gospel accounts mention that one of the disciples did this, but John is the only Gospel writer to say that it was Simon Peter who made this attack. Peter wanted to fulfill his previous promise to defend Jesus at all cost: 'Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' (Matthew 26:35). "It is exceedingly thoughtless in Peter to try to prove his faith by the sword, while he could not do so by his tongue." (Calvin, cited in Morris) John the Gospel writer named Peter as the offender, but did not tell that Jesus miraculously healed the cut-off ear of the high priest's servant (Luke 22:51).

And bound Him: They regarded Jesus dangerous enough to send many soldiers after Him, so in custody they bound Jesus, treating Him as if He were a threat. Yet Jesus remained bound only because He surrendered to His Father's will; hands that healed the sick and raised the dead could certainly break bonds.

One of the officers who stood by struck Jesus: This anonymous official began the physical abuse of Jesus that would end in His crucifixion. In His deity, Jesus knew his name; but as one of those who did not know what they did against God's Messiah (Luke 23:34), his name was graciously not recorded.

Peter then denied again: Matthew 26:74 tells us that Peter denied this third time with cursing and swearing, hoping that this would make them think even more that he was not associated with Jesus. We could say that at this point it was not the faith of Peter that failed, but his courage.

What is truth: Many in our day ask Pilate's question, but from a different perspective. Noting that many things are true only on the basis of personal preference or perspective, they think all truth is personal, individual. They think there is no true truth about God; there is only my truth and your truth and one is as good as the other. Though this thinking is strong in our day, it denies the One who said: **For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.**

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JOHN 18

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I AM WHO I AM

EXODUS 3:14