

The Majesty of Jesus - Matthew 26:47-56

Introduction: Jesus said of His life: *"No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."*

John.10:18 NIV. What that means is that the sovereign hand of God arranged every detail of Jesus' arrest, false trials, abuse and crucifixion. Nothing happened by accident, coincidence or chance.

Last week we what happened in the Garden of Gethsemane as Jesus gained strength and resolve to follow God's will all the way to the cross.

But let's back up a couple of years. Early in Jesus public ministry, at the wedding of Cana in Galilee, Mary had come to Jesus because the wine had run out. She was expecting Him to do something about it. But Jesus said to her, *"Dear woman, why do you involve me...My time has not yet come"* (John 2:4 NIV). But three years later, when Jesus made His triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, He declared, *"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified"* (John 12:23 NIV). What did He mean?

Early on, Jesus was not yet ready to be handed over to the authorities to be crucified. He knew that was His Father's plan from the beginning, but neither He nor the Father was ready. For one thing, Jesus had not had time to set up His ministry. He had called His disciples, but little had been taught.

Another factor in the timing was the fact that Jesus was not well known. He had not traveled all throughout Judea and Galilee. There was not a whole lot of public knowledge of the Messiah. And no one was in an uproar over this man and His teachings. Let me put it this way: At the time of Jesus' arrest, there was not a whole lot of evidence to arrest Him, but earlier, at the wedding in Cana, there was NO evidence! He would have been made into a sideshow of the strange and unusual.

But the main reason His hour had not yet come at that time was that it was not in God's time for Jesus to lay down His own life. You see, Jesus followed God's will. It was God's plan Jesus wanted to obey. He didn't want to be manipulated by man, but motivated by a love and devotion to His Father.

But now Jesus said His hour was here. But it wasn't the hour in which the people would hand Him over, but when His Father would hand him over to be betrayed, arrested, tried and crucified. This was God's eternal plan, which Jesus had agreed to. Finally, in the third year of His ministry, Jesus' hour to die had come.

In vs. 46, Jesus said, *"Rise, let us go. Here comes my betrayer!"* Jesus' arrest underscores the fact that He was not a helpless victim. Remember what He said about His life: *"No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord."* The arrest in the garden shows His power and majesty as He openly confronts those who

wanted to kill Him and emphasizes His sovereign will to become the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

I want to point out three things in Jesus' arrest that shows His power and majesty. First, we see Jesus' majesty in:

1. Jesus' Treatment of the Traitor (47-50a).

Matthew tells us it was "*while He was still speaking*" the words of vs. 45-46 that Judas along with "*a large crowd armed with swords and clubs*" came into the garden to arrest Him.

Notice that Matthew specifically describes Judas as "*one of the twelve*" in vs. 47. He doesn't say "*Judas, the traitor*" or "*Judas, the dirty rat.*" He refers to him as "*one of the twelve.*" This is significant because it underlines how shocked the other disciples were to learn that Judas was the betrayer.

Apocryphal writings portray Judas as overtly demonic and diabolical. One says he was the nephew of the high priest sent to Jesus as a spy. Another says he was the pawn of a greedy wife. Still another says when he was born he had such an evil aura his parents threw him in the sea. He survived, grew up and married a beautiful woman that turned out to be his mother.

But all four gospels describe Judas as "*one of the twelve.*" Judas had been one of them. He had traveled with them, eaten with them, laughed with them and cried with them. For over three years, they shared their lives with him and him with them. They saw him as a trusted brother, one of them and must have been absolutely shocked to know that he was the betrayer of the Lord.

Judas was not alone. "*A large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and elders of the people*" also came along. That garden which had been so still and quiet a few minutes earlier, quiet enough to pray, quiet enough to sleep, was now filled with an army of armed men. Panic must have fallen over the disciples.

The other gospels give us more information about this multitude. Luke 22:52 tells us within the crowd were "*the officers of the Temple guard.*" Even the Temple police were there. They were the ones who were probably carrying clubs. John.18:3 says that there was also "*a detachment of soldiers*" or professional soldiers. No doubt they carried swords. The Greek word suggests a "*cohort*" which at full strength was comprised of 600 men. "*The chief priests and elders of the people*" needed the Roman soldiers because an earlier attempt to arrest Jesus by the Temple police failed. When the religious leaders asked the officers why they didn't arrest Jesus, they said, "*No man ever spoke like this Man!*" This time they hired professionals to do the job right.

When Judas left the upper room, he must have immediately gone to the "*chief priests and elders*" with the

information that Jesus would be in Gethsemane. The Jewish leaders needed time to get the professional soldiers from Pilate and probably concocted the story that Jesus was stirring up insurrection against Rome.

Conservatively, the armed multitude numbered in the hundreds.

Why so many? Jesus had always eluded them before. They took no chances. They wanted to be certain they could arrest Him. Though they had no legal grounds for arrest, though most of the men in the crowd probably knew very little about Jesus, though their numbers were obviously overkill, though they acted in complete cowardice, they didn't care. They saw Jesus as a threat that must be neutralized.

In vs. 48, Judas said, *"The one I kiss, He is the man; arrest him."* Remember it is probably after midnight. There were no electric lights. It would have been very dark in the shadows of an olive grove. The mob needed Judas to make a positive ID. Perhaps they feared that one of the other disciples might pretend to be Him that He might escape.

In that culture, kissing someone on the cheek was a sign of close affection and deep commitment. It is like saying, *"You are my close friend, close to my heart."*

Vs. 49 says, *"Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' and kissed Him."* Matthew's word for "kissed" means *"to kiss earnestly or repeatedly."* Luke 7:38 uses the same word to describe how a sinful woman washed Jesus' feet with her tears and kissed them in worship. Judas knew no shame. He chose a symbol of affection and worship to seal his betrayal.

Jesus looks Judas in the eye and asks, *"Friend, do what you came for."* Jesus didn't use the normal word for friend, *philos* but *hetairos* meaning *"comrade."* He seems to be distant from Judas and very sad. Luke adds that Jesus asked, *"Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"* (22:48 NIV).

Jesus didn't condemn Judas. He didn't call him a traitor, an apostate or a fool. He called him a friend and asked him why he would do such a thing. Jesus knew that Judas' heart had been hardened. He already said, *"Woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born"* (26:24 NIV). What we see in this embrace is the contrast between the betrayal of Judas and the majesty of Christ. Judas' betrayal makes Jesus' glory all the more radiant. Next, we see Jesus' majesty in:

2. Jesus' Avoidance of Violence (50b-54).

Turn to **John.18:4-6 READ**. Looking beyond Jesus to the Jewish leader of the mob, Jesus asked, *"Whom is it you want?"* They answered back, *"Jesus of Nazareth."* Judas was standing beside as a witness when Jesus answered, *"I am he."* Note the majesty of the Son of God in v.6, *"When Jesus said, 'I am he,' they drew back*

and fell to the ground." The great I AM spoke majestically and the pagans fell at the sound of His voice.

Regaining their senses, Matthew says, *"The men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested Him."* Luke 22:49 says that when the disciples realized what was happening, they asked, *"Lord, should we strike with our swords?"* Peter didn't wait for an answer but he *"...drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear."* (vs. 51).

Luke 22:38 tells us that they had *"two swords"* and one obviously belonged to Peter. John 18:10 tells us that this *"servant of the high priest"* was named Malchus. Obviously, Peter tried to hit him on the head, but missed and merely cut off an ear.

Jesus said to Peter, *"Put your sword back in its place."* Here, we see three reasons why Jesus told Peter to put his sword away. First, He said, *"All who draw the sword will die by the sword."* (52). This is not evidence of Christian pacifism as many have tried to claim. Jesus was merely reminding Peter that to violate governmental laws of murder is to bring sure punishment.

God has given government to authority to punish murderers. For example, Timothy McVeigh was executed for killing more than 168 people in the Oklahoma City bombing. He took up the sword and then he died by the sword.

But individuals do not have that authority. Gen. 9:6 (NIV) says, *"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God has God made man."* It is as though Jesus is saying, *"No matter how unjust this may seem, it does not give you the right to commit murder. If you do, you too will be executed."*

Second, Jesus asks Peter, *"Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and He will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"* (vs. 53). A Roman legion consisted of 6,000 soldiers. *"Twelve legions of angels"* would be 72,000. When we consider that in 2 Kings 19:35, a single angel killed 185,000 Assyrian troops under Sennacherib, the awesome power of *"twelve legions"* is unimaginable! Jesus certainly didn't need little ole Peter to defend Him!

Third, Jesus asks Peter, *"But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled, that say it must happen in this way?"* Almost every aspect of the betrayal, arrest, suffering, crucifixion, burial and resurrection were foretold in the Old Testament. On several occasions, Jesus had taught the disciples that He would suffer such things. Jesus was reminding Peter that even this seemingly unjust arrest was part of the sovereign plan God already prophesied in Scripture. In John 18:11 (NIV), the Lord asks Peter *"Shall I not drink the cup the Father has*

given me?"

Imagine what could have happened if Jesus had not stopped Peter. He would have kept slashing with his sword until he was cut down... until they all were cut down! The death of the disciples at that time would have been pointless. Jesus' death by the sword in a dark olive grove would not accomplish any redemptive purpose.

But Jesus quickly undid what Peter had done. Luke 22:51 (NIV) says that Jesus then *"touched the man's ear and healed him."* Third, we see Jesus' Majesty in:

3. Jesus' Defense of the Disciples (55-56).

Jesus says in vs. 55, *"Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me."* The fact that they came to arrest Him in the middle of the night was proof that they had no legitimate charge against him. Jesus had done nothing underhanded but taught openly for all to hear. The religious leaders chose this time and this place because they feared *"a riot among the people"* (v.5). Jesus adds, *"But this has all taken place..."*, the coming of Judas, the Temple police, the Roman soldiers, the cloak and dagger approach in the middle of the night, all this *"...has taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled."* (56).

Truth is, these men hated Jesus. They saw Him as a threat to their positions and they wanted Him dead at all costs. They plotted and chose this course of action. What they did not realize is that they were doing the perfect will of God. They were fulfilling a plan established from the foundation of the earth!

But Jesus' words of prophecy fulfilled fell on deaf ears. The mob didn't understand and didn't care. The disciples were so focused on their desperate circumstances that they could not focus on the sovereign plan of God. In John.18:8-9 (NIV), Jesus acted to protect them. He said, *"'If you are looking for me, then let these men go.' This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled, 'I have not lost one of those You gave me.'"*

Fulfilling both prophecies and Jesus' own prediction, *"Then all the disciples deserted him and fled."* (56). They escaped into the darkness and left Jesus alone with His accusers.

Conclusion: In Jesus' agony and arrest in the Garden, and His crucifixion on the cross, and His resurrection three days later, nothing happened by accident. God had carefully orchestrated it all. From Jesus' treatment of the traitor, to the way He avoided a violent bloodbath, to His tender protection of His disciples, the majesty of Jesus was evident in it all.

Jesus' majesty has been present in His sanctuary today. We've sang praises to Him, given offerings to

Him, prayed to Him, and heard Him speak through His Holy Word. Do you see Him high and lifted up right now? Will you come and bow to His majesty in humble worship and prayer as we bring this glorious day of worship to a close?