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Arrested by Glory **John 18:4-12**

Intro: We are looking at the final events of Jesus' life in this section of John's Gospel but what we should understand is that Jesus had begun to set these events in motion as far back as **ch12** with His dramatic entry into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday. Since that time, Jesus has been prepping His disciples for His departure while the religious rulers have been plotting His demise. One of the most infamous players in this drama is Judas Iscariot. In fact, Judas' name is now synonymous with treachery and betrayal. But, beyond his betrayal, what was Judas' true role in all of this? Why were Judas and his betrayal so necessary that the chief priests were actually willing to pay him for it?

There are 2 common answers given to this question in theological circles. One is that Judas' help was required to lead the arresting party to Jesus' hiding place during these last days. But to peg Judas as being an informer is pretty lame for the simple fact that Jesus was not in hiding. It would've been difficult for Him to have been any more public!

From the day He arrived in Bethany and raised Lazarus from the dead the week before, to His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, His 2nd cleansing of the Temple and public teaching; all the while openly traveling from Bethany to Jerusalem and back every day. With all this public exposure, why did the religious leaders need Judas? They could have arrested Jesus in Jerusalem an nearly any moment, or could have even had Him arrested in Bethany.

The 2nd common answer is that the religious leaders wanted to arrest Jesus secretly because they feared the reaction of the people. This was only partially true. If the arrest of Jesus caused a large enough uproar amongst the Passover crowd then the Roman officials could intervene with their soldiers and cause real problems for these men. But still, there were plenty of opportunities for them to take Jesus secretly during this week but they didn't do it. Their decision to rely on Judas to bring them information to affect an arrest means other considerations were going on.

No, the biggest problem these men had was a fear of Jesus Himself. For one thing, He did have great appeal to the masses; they had even tried to

make Him their king at one point, a political Messiah. What would happen if Jesus decided to take up the mantle as political Messiah? What if He tried to do it during this Passover? That idea wasn't too far of a stretch after watching Him enter the city riding a donkey's foal to great fanfare and celebration. Of course, there was also the fact of His undeniable supernatural power. At the beginning of His ministry, they tried to deny His miracles then ignore them; but after the Lazarus party, they not only had to acknowledge His power, they feared it.

Besides all this, there were plenty of previous attempts to arrest Jesus that had all failed miserably. Either Jesus arrested the arresting party with His wisdom or He just slipped into the crowd and walked away from them. Their constant failure combined with His obvious power and popularity must have brought them to the disheartening position of thinking that Jesus was unarrestable! This would explain why they didn't try to arrest Him earlier in the week: they weren't even planning to. In fact, with the Passover looming so close, there wasn't really enough time to set up a legal arrest, trial and execution.

The religious rulers weren't planning to do anything against Jesus during this feast, they weren't prepared to take any action and I'm sure they wouldn't have done anything against Jesus had not Judas showed up with a story to tell. What did Judas say to them? There's no way to know but Judas has heard Jesus speak several times of His own upcoming death and now He was assuring His disciples that His death was imminent. It's quite possible that Judas just told them that if they were going to do something, they better do it now.

If we accept this scenario, then we must acknowledge that Judas went to the temple with information that Jesus had given him directly. In a sense, we could even say that Judas was sent with this information about Jesus by Jesus Himself, straight from the upper room. If this is the case then the whole purpose for Judas' participation in these events was to prompt the rulers to move against Jesus against their own fear, their own lack of preparation and against their own religiously imposed timetable. On the surface it looks like His enemies are closing in when all the while, Jesus is setting these events into motion because His hour has now come to sacrifice His life for our sin.

4-5- John leaves no doubt in our minds as to who is running this show. Jesus' complete knowledge of the situation dictates His actions here. It was Jesus who delayed in the Garden while the arresting party was coming for Him, a location that was well known to His betrayer. It's Jesus who walks out to meet them, voluntarily surrendering Himself. It's clear that they were expecting trouble of some sort, maybe even some deception. Above all, they hoped to take Jesus by surprise but this was impossible. His entire life was spent preparing for this hour and He was ready for it. Still, even at the moment of His arrest, Jesus revealed His complete control of the circumstances by demonstrating power to the soldiers, grace to His disciples and mercy to His enemies.

6 – John is the only Gospel writer to record this incident because he's emphasizing the power of Jesus throughout these events. Jesus boldly goes out to meet the arresting officers because He had nothing to fear and nothing to hide. He confronts them with a question? "Who are you looking for?" It must have been dark in the Garden since none of them fully recognized Him. If they had, they would have just said, "You! We're looking for You." Instead, they merely replied with the name written on the warrant – Jesus of Nazareth. It's here John records His display of power for as He answers with the simple phrase, "I am," the entire arresting party drew back and fell to the ground where they apparently remained until Jesus released them by asking His question again.

What caused this strange reaction? It couldn't be, as some propose, that they were just nervous and His audacity shocked and set them back. A crowd of 400-600 armed men are rarely surprised or bullied by 1 unarmed man. One clue is to note that they stepped backward and fell to the ground in response to His presence and His declaration of those majestic words: "I am." What is the significance of His answer? They're not magic words for He will use them again in vs8 without all the back flips and falling. No, the significance of these words is they are the great name of the God of Israel, Jehovah. The name revealed to Moses in the burning bush when God commissioned him to lead His people Israel out of Egypt. It is the name that is above every name and in using it, Jesus revealed just enough of His majesty to cause these hardened Roman combat soldiers and Jewish Temple officers to fall out. Why did they fall down? Because they couldn't stand up!

Here is a great contrast, a revelation of the glory and power of Jesus at the very moment of His arrest but it's just another example of the paradox of the incarnation found throughout the Scriptures. His birth was a picture of human weakness (baby in a manger) but it was announced by angels. He's born poor, but a star leads kings from the east to bring Him royal offerings. At His baptism He identifies with sinners though He had no sin and heard the divine voice from heaven declare, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." He falls asleep in the back of a boat from exhaustion but awakens to calm the storm. He wept at the grave of Lazarus, then called the dead back to life. He prayed in agony in the Garden then goes out to confront His enemies and overpower them with the force of His presence. He dies on a cross but by this, He defeats sin, death and Satan.

This strange blending of opposites clues us into why Jesus did this here. It was to show that He was more than just a man. Was He a man? Yes, but He was also God manifest in flesh. He knew that it was necessary for Him to die for our salvation as a man and as God. He must be a man to die. But He must also be God if that death was going to be adequate as a ransom price for our sin. This is what He is declaring at the moment of His capture.

7-9 – Jesus asks them a second time, "Who are you looking for?" By this time, these guys must be thinking that this is a loaded question. I would be hesitant to answer but they weren't; they gave the same answer as before as does Jesus. Jesus asked this question the first time to allow them to declare their evil intentions and because He wanted to ensure that any potential violence would be directed at Him, not at the disciples. After being knocked to the ground enmasse, the soldiers could now switch to panic mode and attack the disciples so Jesus asks the question again to bring their attention back to Himself. Once again, they declare that their business is with Him alone. Since He is the one they came for, Jesus commands that they allow the disciples to go their way.

This is a statement of effective grace towards the disciples for **vs9** declares that none of them were lost. John uses this small example to illustrate the general exercise of God's grace by which Jesus constantly preserves all those whom the Father has given Him. The evidence of His preserving grace towards His people is seen all over the Bible:

Heb 7:25; II Tim 1:12; Heb 2:18; Phil 3:20-21; Jude 24-25. Jesus preserves His people by lifting us out from the darkness of this world into His

marvelous light, by interceding for us in heaven, by guarding our spiritual deposits, by seeing us through temptation, by saving our bodies at the last resurrection, and by bringing us without blemish into the presence of His and the Father's glory. He does this by placing Himself between us and our enemies.

10-12 – Before we talk about Jesus' actions here, we must address Peter's. What is Peter doing here? His reaction here would be completely understandable if he had been caught flat-footed, without a clue as to what's happening, half-asleep and bleary-eyed and confronted with a large crowd trying to take away the Master he dearly loves. But Peter wasn't flat-footed, at least he shouldn't have been. Jesus had been telling them for weeks now that He was going to die and rise again. In fact, at one point, Peter actually argues with Jesus, telling Him He's wrong about dying and Jesus must confront him and tell him, "Get behind Me Satan..." Now, if the Person I believe to be the Son of God finds it necessary to call me Satan, I think I would step back and rethink some of my life choices. But not Peter!

Peter's sword represents rebellion against the will of God. Peter should have known that Jesus would be arrested and that He would surrender willingly to His enemies. Peter was convinced he was in the right but he was doing everything wrong! He fought the wrong enemy, used the wrong weapon, had the wrong motive and accomplished the wrong result. He was not only openly resisting the will of God in this situation; he was actually hindering the work that Jesus came to accomplish in bringing salvation to mankind. We can admire Peter's courage but it was courage without knowledge and later, he wouldn't even have courage.

How did Peter fail so miserably? For one thing, he argued with Jesus when He warned him that he would deny his Master that very night. Peter slept when he should have been praying; he talked when he should've been listening. He actually imitated the very enemies who came to arrest Jesus for they were armed with swords too. Just as the weapons of the enemy were powerless to take Jesus, so the weapon of Peter was powerless to protect Him. Jesus didn't need Peter's protection; He needed Peter's attention and submission. That's really all Jesus needs from any of us. By wielding the sword, Peter was acting like a Jewish "Zealots," not like a disciple of Christ. It's foolish to attempt to defend God with weapons of the flesh. It reveals an insensitivity to God's plan and purposes

Thankfully, Peter would give up wielding a metal sword and would one day take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. This is the weapon God's servants use to fight their spiritual battles – the only battles worth fighting. Peter would eventually use this sword at Pentecost and would save 3000 souls by leading them to Christ.

While Peter's life is a great lesson for all believers, there's a greater truth to be seen in these last few verses. What this incident reveals is that, here at His worst moment, Jesus was showing mercy even to His enemies! This great mercy is shown by Jesus in vs11, in His willingness to drink the cup that the Father has given Him. The drinking of a cup is often used in Scripture to illustrate the experience of suffering and sorrow. The cup here represented the suffering Jesus would endure and the separation from the Father he would experience on the cross. The fact that Jesus prayed about this cup 3 times that night is clear evidence that His entire being was sensitive to the great price He would have to pay for our salvation. This is His mercy extended to all mankind

There is another cup mentioned in Scripture, the cup of salvation (Ps 116:13) "I will take up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord." 2 cups: the cup of salvation and the cup of God's wrath and judgment against sin. Every person who has ever lived will drink from one of these 2 cups, but only from 1. But, those who, by God's grace, drink from the cup of salvation can only drink of it because Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath in our place!

Finally, it bears mentioning that Jesus revealed His power to those who came to arrest Him in order to make it clear to them that they were without excuse. Many in the arresting party may never have seen Jesus before. But, after this encounter, they will never be able to say that they didn't know who He was. They're no longer ignorant of His divine glory. So, if they continued on their sin after Jesus released them from the bondage of His power, it'd be because they refused to recognize or heed the truth, not because they were unaware of it.

It will be the same on the day Jesus returns to this earth. In that day, His deity will clearly be made manifest and the guilt and sinful rebellion of man will be fully exposed. That will be a day of judgment and not of grace. Today

is the time to turn from your sin and acknowledge Jesus Christ both as your Savior and your Lord. 😊