



CAPITOL COMMISSION

“Cut and Run” or “Stay the Course” (John 18:1-11)

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As Jesus leaves the room where He eats the Last Supper and offers His High Priestly Prayer, His private ministry to His disciples ends and the public drama of His arrest, trials, suffering, and crucifixion begins.

THE BETRAYAL AND ARREST (JOHN 18:1-11)

John 18:1-3—When he had 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. Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. 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.

They crossed the Brook Kidron in the Kidron Valley and headed east to an olive grove or garden on the western slope of the Mt. of Olives. The Brook Kidron is apply named for it means “turbid, gloomy,” referring to the dark waters that flowed through this wadi during the winter months. Jesus and His disciples were about to go through “dark waters.” This particular garden is called Gethsemane in Matthew and Mark’s Gospels, which means “oil press.” What a picture of suffering. Our Lord would experience the “oil press” when His life would be squeezed out for you and for me. It was here where Jesus had often spent nights with His disciples whenever His travels took Him to Jerusalem (*Luke 21:37*). It was also a quiet place where He would spend time with His Father to prepare Himself spiritually for what was to come (*Mark 14:32*). He was facing *the hour* to which God had called Him (*John 12:23-24*).

Do you have a favorite place, away from the crowd, where you spend time alone with God? Do you spend time in prayer preparing yourself spiritually to carry out your Father’s will?

(Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; Psalm 91:15)

It was late at night and His disciples, exhausted from a long day, had fallen asleep. John doesn’t cover the agony Jesus experienced while in prayer (*Luke 22:44*), but He does give us a picture of His devotion to God’s will. In the flesh, He wanted to flee, but He was fully devoted to His Father and needed the Father to strengthen Him for the ordeal and judgment of the cross.

Roman soldiers, detached from the garrison in Jerusalem and Jewish officials, brought together by the priests and Pharisees, came to arrest Jesus. They carried lanterns, torches and weapons because they thought He might try to escape and hide in the bushes, olive groves or caves found in the area.

John 18:4-6—Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?” “Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “I am he,” Jesus said. (And Judas, the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.

Jesus didn’t wait for them to find Him. He went out willingly to meet them face to face. Earlier, when the people wanted to force Him to take a crown and make Him King, He withdrew and hid from them (*John 6:15*). But now, when they came to force Him to take a cross, He offered Himself willingly. He came to earth to be a willing sacrifice for our sins, so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled (*Matthew 26:53-54*).

Judas, a constant companion of Jesus, who witnessed His miracles, sat under His teaching, and professed to be a believer, stood there with them. “Judas was not an unusual monster but a common man caught in a common sin (greed) which Satan used in hope of accomplishing his purpose.”¹ He went from a place of highest privilege to the lowest depths of sin, illustrating the fact that it is but a succession of steps that lead to destruction. When privilege is misused, it seems to paralyze the conscience. This was illustrated in bold print on the front page of the News & Observer January 22nd of this year when the sins of several people in our state’s political arena were listed:

extortion, bribery, racketeering, fraud, money laundering
prostitution, adultery, and fathering a child out of wedlock

The Scriptures tell us that “*every inclination of man’s heart is evil from childhood*” (*Genesis 8:21*) and “*the heart is deceitful above all things*” (*Jeremiah 17:9*). So, we must beware of secret, besetting sins within our hearts (love of money; love of the world) that will ruin our walk with God, destroy family relationships and wreck our vocations (*Psalm 44:20-21*).

Temptations come our way from one of three sources: the world, the flesh or the devil. They are inevitable and are always an individual matter. You may be entertaining a temptation at this time. Don’t believe the lie that unlike other situations, things are different in your case such as: “*Nobody’s wife/husband treats them like mine does,*” or, “*I’ve worked so hard, I deserve some spice in my life,*” or “*No one will find out, I’ve earned it, I’m going for it.*” When faced with temptation, first recall *1 Corinthians 10:13*, always watch and pray (*Matthew 26:41; Galatians 6:1b*), submit to God and resist the devil (*James 4:7*).

When Jesus said, “*I am he,*” an invisible force must have accompanied His words. How else can we account for Roman soldiers falling prostrate before him, a single unarmed man?

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They were struck with His authority, power and presence. It was probably the same invisible power that was evidenced when those in authority were powerless to stop Him when He made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem and when He purged the temple of the moneychangers.

John 18:7-9—Again he asked them, “Who is it you want?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” “I told you that I am he,” Jesus answered. “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.”

Jesus repeats His question as if to test the effect His power had on them, but their hearts were hardened. I believe this display of His power, as well as surrendering to them, helped to keep His disciples from being taken prisoners (*Psalm 27:2*). He cared more for His disciples than He did for Himself. He kept them safe, not only spiritually (*John 17:11-12*), but also physically. They would remember that His very last thought, before He was made a prisoner, was for them and their safety. He operates the same way on our behalf today (*John 10:28*).

His protection of the apostles was a perfect illustration of His substitutionary atonement. He died not only for them but instead of them...He did not lose any of His sheep but fulfilled His Father's will...and His own prophetic Word (*John 6:38-39*).²

It was probably at this point, after they had regained their composure, that Judas came forward and kissed Jesus. Up until now they had not recognized Him.

John 18: 10-11—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.) Jesus commanded Peter, “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”

Peter thought the time had come for his Messiah to free Israel and establish the throne of David as the dominant nation in the world. In spite of Jesus constantly teaching His disciples about His approaching death (*John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32-33; Luke 9:22*), His disciples didn't get it. Peter acted as if he could prevent what was coming. His sword symbolized rebellion against the will of God. He fought the wrong enemy, used the wrong weapon, had the wrong motive and accomplished the wrong result. He took his stand for Jesus *in the flesh*, therefore he failed. **Actions taken in the flesh always result in failure.**

Notice that all through this account, Peter is referred to as “Simon Peter.” Whenever the Holy Spirit chooses to use that name, Peter is always acting in the flesh, moving in his own strength, and trying to do things his own way. However, Peter

learned great lessons from this incident. Years later, thinking back on these very events, he wrote of Jesus, “*when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly*” (*1 Peter 2:23*). This was a spiritual battle and the sword of the Spirit (God's Word) is the weapon to use when fighting spiritual battles. Later, Peter would use this sword to slay 3,000 souls (*Acts 2:41*). “Only John's Gospel gives the name of Peter as the striker and Malchus as the person struck. This is probably because John's Gospel was written long after the other three, when Peter and Malchus were both dead, and their names could, therefore, be safely mentioned.”³ Luke added in his Gospel that Jesus healed the man's ear (*Luke 22:51*) an act of grace toward Malchus.

The rhetorical question Jesus asks Peter was meant to show Peter and us that: (1) What He was about to suffer was all part of God's sovereign plan, and (2) He was ready and willing to drink the cup that God had prepared for Him. The cup refers to the suffering and death Jesus would experience at God's judgment against sin. The cup is associated with suffering (*Isaiah 51:17*) and it is also associated with salvation (*Psalm 116:13*). We can lift up and celebrate the cup of salvation because Jesus drank the cup of suffering and experienced judgment and death for us (*Isaiah 53:10*).

Warren Wiersbe writes, “Jesus was able to accept the cup because it was mixed by the Father and given to Him from the Father's hand. We need never fear what is in the cup because the Father has prepared it for us in love. We may suffer pain and heartbreak, but He will eventually transform that suffering into glory.”⁴

Has God ever given you a cup that brought fear to your heart? How did you respond? (Psalm 112:7; Isaiah 41:10)

Matthew Henry comments, “It is but a cup, a small matter comparatively, be it what it will. It is a cup that is given us; sufferings are gifts. It is given us by a Father, who has a Father's authority, and does us no wrong; a Father's affection, and means us no hurt. From the example of our Saviour we should learn how to receive our lighter afflictions and to ask ourselves whether we ought to oppose our Father's will or to distrust his love.”⁵

Jesus' submission to His Father's will should be our model for submitting to God's will in everything we do.

1. Edwin A. Blum, “John,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (New Testament edition, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: chariot Victor publishing, 1983), p.334

2. Ibid, p.335

3. J.C.Ryle, Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, Volume Four, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1979, p.223

4. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Volume 1, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1989, p.374

5. Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, St. John, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN 1979, p.413