



The DAILY JESUS NEWS #302
Friday... Day of Agony and Atonement

Jesus' Arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane

Judas Leads the Soldiers and Leaders to Jesus
JN 18.2-9 (Parallel Texts: MT 27.47; MK 14.43; LK 22.47)

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2 ^MJust as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. 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 ^{MT}large ^Jdetachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests, the Pharisees, ^{MT}and the elders of the people. ^JThey were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons--^{MT}swords and clubs.

4 ^JJesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "*Who are you seeking?*"

5 "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I AM," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) 6 When Jesus said, *"I AM,"* they stepped back and fell to the ground.

7 Again he asked them, "*Who are you seeking?*" "Jesus of Nazareth," they said.

8 Jesus answered, "*I told you that I AM. Since you are looking for me, I command you to 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.*" (JN 17.12)

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

| | CONTEXT DIGEST |
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| Location | The Garden of Gethsemane, on Mount Olivet |
| Timeline | Early April (Month 39) |
| Jesus' Life Context | Stage VIII: Passion Week |
| | E. Friday: Day of Agony and Atonement |

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| | Jesus' Arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane |
| Title | Judas Leads the Soldiers and Leaders to Jesus |

The greatest day of Jesus' earthly life, Friday of Passion Week, began very early--around midnight-- with his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Three DJN readings will cover the four-gospel accounts of this gut-wrenching scene. It was just the beginning; by mid afternoon the horrors that Jesus endured for us would culminate in his death. Like everything else about his life, Jesus' arrest was like none other in history.

We should note at the outset that all four gospels chronicle the events of this climactic day. Only one other event in Jesus' life made it into all four gospels: the Feeding of the 5000. Attentive readers of the DJN will recognize that many portions of Jesus' life are only recorded in one of the four gospels. Events that make it into two accounts are relatively few, as are those that are found in three. Other than the feeding of the 5000, only the story of what happened on "Good Friday"--his trials and death-merit non-stop coverage in all four gospels. This shows us the supreme importance of Jesus' death.

The gospel writers emphasized the greatness and grace of Jesus in this scene, the wickedness of Judas Iscariot's betrayal in contrast, and the marginalized role of his captors. Jesus was in control, and directing the proceedings--even in his arrest. The entire narrative of Jesus' death illustrates what he said about it:

"The Father loves me because I lay down by life, so that I may take it up again. No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down on my own initiative. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up again. I received this instruction from my Father." (JN 10.17-18)

John wrote that a "detachment" of soldiers came to Gethsemane under the guidance of Judas. A "detachment" officially numbered 600 men when going into battle, but Jesus' arrest probably did not call for the full cohort, as temple guards, priests, Pharisees, and other elders of the people also joined to form the "large crowd" numbering in the hundreds. With torches, lanterns, swords, clubs, knives, and other weapons at their disposal, it was an overwhelming force against roughly 20 men in Jesus' band. However, Jesus was not intimidated by any of it. Quite the contrary!

John recounted that Jesus took the initiative by (twice) asking a key question: ***"Who (or what) are you seeking?"*** This was the same question he had asked the first two disciples to believe in him (JN 1.38). In that case the question led into the disciple-making movement that will ultimately reach to every person on earth.

In the Garden, the question led into the flow of events that would culminate in his death, which removes the sins of the entire world. In both cases those who answered Jesus' question received much more than they could imagine when they first heard his query.

The fact that Jesus twice answered "I AM" when his persecutors said they were seeking for Jesus of Nazareth probably explains the way they immediately withdrew and fell to the ground, in a defensive position. The utterly fearless claim to be the great "I AM"--YHWH, coupled with the way Jesus commanded them to let his disciples go free was a demonstration of poise and power like nothing the crowd had ever seen. Jesus was in command of his own arrest.

Jesus was always keen to make sure that what he said came true. John quoted Jesus' statement made earlier in prayer (JN 17.13), that he did not lose any of the disciples that the Father had entrusted to him, other than the one who was prophesied as the betrayer in the Psalms (69.25; 109.8). John described Jesus' words as being fulfilled in the same way that he, and the other gospel writers described the Old

Testament Scriptures being fulfilled. In other words, John believed the words of Jesus were the Word of God--his original title for Jesus in John 1.1-3.

Jesus knew *"all that was going to happen to him"* (JN 18.4). This equipped him to walk through every moment of his suffering as the Victor--the Overcomer--rather than as a victim.

The Father had no other option, or back-up plan. Jesus HAD to die to atone for the sins of the world. It was not about him, nor was anything due to the power or plan of people. It was all the Divine plan, so Jesus used his authority to bring it to pass. This was truly an arrest like none other.

APPLICATION:

Like Jesus, our confidence and power is in the will of God. When we know that we are doing his pleasure, we can hold our heads high and walk in our God-given authority as sons and daughters of the King of the universe.

We are NEVER victims when we suffer in doing the will of God. We are co-heirs with Jesus, honored with the privilege of paying a price to follow him.

What is your attitude when your faith, or obedience is painful in the short-term? Do you consider yourself a victim?

If so, meditate on the glorious example of your Lord in this scene, until you sincerely glory in the blessing of suffering for his sake.

There are no victims following Jesus closely. There are only those who share in HIS victory, for he said: ***"I command you to keep on being courageous. I have permanently overcome the world!"*** (JN 16.33)