

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: As Jesus faces His betrayers, the jealous, pious, fraud, religious leaders, and hostile soldiers, the Passion begins! Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley into the grove of olives, while Judas, one of His most trusted Disciples, betrayed Him to the leading priests and soldiers along with the Temple guards; they all converged upon Jesus and His Disciples with weapons drawn and the intimidation of the lanterns burning. Jesus, of course, knew this would happen and could have stopped it, but He submits to the Father on our behalf and met them with these words: *whom do you seek?* They replied, *Jesus of Nazareth. I am He*, Jesus said. As they fell backwards to the ground without even a hint of His power, Jesus asked for the others to go. As previously foretold, *not any of His are harmed*. Peter, acting impulsively, drew his sword and attacked, slicing off the ear of the high priest's servant; Jesus responded by healing it back. He then asked Peter to stand down and put his sword in its sheath, because he still had to drink the cup that the Father had for Him. And so it begins; Jesus is arrested, bound, and taken, first to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest who disrespected Jesus with the statement, *better that one die for all*. Yet, how powerful those words will be as One will indeed die for all to pay for sins He did not commit, but that we did, so that we can be forgiven!

Contexts and Background

The Passion of Christ commences! This passage continues to events after the last Supper and the Garden of Gethsemane. The Disciples had a very long and tiring day and the drama of redemption was just beginning. To have remained focused and committed at this time was perhaps the ultimate test of life, death, and meekness as well as frustration that Jesus undertook!

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings

- *Kidron Valley / brook Cedron*. Meaning “winter swollen” or “torrent,” as in a sporadic brook that only flows when it rains and was only a problem to cross during the rainy season of December; thus, since it was April at this time, this brook was just a minor step-over (Luke 22:39).
- *Garden / olive grove*. Also called *Gethsemane*, this means “olive oil press.” Ironically and prophetically, this is where David was betrayed by his close friend Ahithophel. It was a garden valley where olive oil was made from the olives of nearby groves, between north of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, a 15 minute walk from the “upper room,” where they had the Last Supper and Jesus delivered His final discourse. This pristine prayer spot, which was either walled off or sectioned off for specific use at that time, and where He often meet in a “bivouac” (temporary shelter like for the Feast of Booths) to pray with His Disciples, becomes the spot where Jesus is to be betrayed. They probably arrived around 10:00 to 11:00 p.m. (2 Sam. 15:23; 1 Kings 2:37; 15:13; 2 Kings 23:4-12; Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32; Luke 13:19; 21:37; John 19:41).
- *Judas Iscariot*. Perhaps no name in all of the ages signifies betrayal and disloyalty more than his! This man, who was with Jesus from the beginning and close in his relationship with Him, was perhaps even closer than the rest, yet would be the one to betray Him! He was an *Apostle (Apostolos)*, the word meaning *emissary*, or *sent ones*, as in Jesus' commissioned representatives (Matt. 10:1-4, 14, 40; 15:24; Mark 6:7-13; 9:37; Luke 9:1-6; 48; John 4:34; 5:24, 30, 36-38; 6:38; 1 Cor. 1:1; Heb. 3:1). He would later hang himself (Matt. 26:14-16, 47-50; 27:3-10). Yet, he was considered the “best” disciple—the best looking and the most promising. Obviously, looks and position do not tell us what is inside a person (John 13:29)!
- *Betrayed*. Betrayal, especially by a close friend or follower, is perhaps the one most heartbreaking emotion in the human experience. Why did Judas do this? In all likelihood, his motivation to betray Jesus stemmed from confusion; blinded by pride and rage, he sought to force Jesus' hand to overthrow the Romans, not understanding Jesus' true mission. Or, as some have speculated, and what Scripture suggests, Satan entered him and used him, seeking to destroy Jesus. In all likelihood, both are true, as Satan uses our pride and rage for his gain. Another prime motivation was greed for money that overtook his focus upon Christ as Lord. Was Judas saved? We have not the mind of God to know that information; however the fruit of his life would seem to say no. He seemed not to believe or trust in Christ, but sought only money and

power and position and is a startling example of what happens to many people who seek money, power, and prestige and not the faith of trusting in Christ. Those who seek their will while pretending to be in the Kingdom never live in and for Christ and instead become lost in the shadow of being found and saved (John 6:6-71; 13:11-18; 17:12).

- *Soldiers / band of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees.* These are the Jewish Temple guards, not necessarily the Roman soldiers who were stationed there to prevent rioting (some translations have the “Roman cohort,” which would have been 800+ in that company, one-tenth of a legion that was 6,000, but this is not in the Greek text). They were not used to service occupied religious leaders; besides, they would have taken Jesus to their military leader first—not a Jewish leader. There may have been Roman soldiers there acting as mercenaries or by favor; in any account, this would have been a sizable group to lynch Jesus. Through the three years of Jesus’ earthly ministry, the religious leaders were seeking to kill Him. Now they had their window. I do not believe we can ever fully appreciate or understand what Jesus has done on our behalf (Matt. 27:27; John 7:32-46).
- *Torches, lanterns and weapons.* The *torches* were made from pieces of long, thin wood tied together and dipped in plant resins or tar. The *lanterns* were clay terra-cotta containers where oil was inserted with a wick and then lit, like Aladdin’s lamp. They either expected resistance from Jesus and His followers and/or just wanted a grand show of force to intimidate and flaunt who they thought was in charge. Yet, the Disciples were asleep. The Passover was during a full moon and thus torches would not be necessary; thus, they were used as a tool for fright, not light (Mark 14:50; Luke 22:45-46).
- *Knowing all.* Jesus was not surprised; His being fully God and having absolute knowledge, control, and power, humbled and submitted Himself to the plan of redemption. Even though at any time He could easily have escaped His pain, He did not, which was for our gain (John 10:14-18).
- *Jesus of Nazareth.* Where Jesus grew up and called “home.” People were known by their father’s name, like “Jesus, son of Joseph” or where they were from, “Jesus of Nazareth” (John 1:35-51; 17:12).
- *I am.* Meaning *I am the one you seek*; this also alludes to the prime name of God, meaning “I am GOD,” hence why they *fell to the ground* (Ex. 3:14; Ezek. 1:28; 44:4; Dan. 2:46; 8:18; 10:9; Hos. 13:4; Joel 2:27; Matt. 14:27; John 6:35; 7:45-46; 8:58; 9:9; Rev. 1:17).
- *Let these men go.* This echoes Jesus’ “substitutionary atonement,” meaning He took the place of our punishment by being perfectly sinless, paying our debt for sin. Jesus, out of unselfish love, was more concerned for His Disciples than for His own wellbeing. This was in contrast to Judas’ selfish self-interests (John 10:11; 17:12).
- *Sword, drew it.* Perhaps a Roman “gladius,” a short sword used for stabbing that can be hidden in one’s garment. Peter’s impulsiveness and not knowing how to use the sword would have cost many, if not all of the Disciple’s lives as they would not have won—without supernatural intervention—in that conflict. Jesus refocuses them on what is important—Kingdom values—and what He must do. Earlier that evening, Jesus rebuked Peter for his impulsiveness and not paying attention to God’s will. Passion, without the right knowledge, will always be folly and lead others astray! Jesus is not against self-defense, as He had prior instructed his Disciples to buy swords. Rather, He wanted them to be sensitive as to what is right in the right time (Matt. 16:21-23; Luke 22:35-38; John 13:6-11; Rom. 10:2).
- *High Priest’s servant, Malchus, cutting off his right ear.* High priests were well paid and had several servants that were not Levites and did not minister who did the grunt work. Because his name is mentioned, an Arab name, and he is also listed in the works of Josephus, he may have been a significant person beyond a servant or else this was an example of how Jesus felt about servants, that they matter. If Jesus had not healed him, as recorded in Luke, his disfigurement would have prevented him from ever again going into the Temple, let alone serving; it was a great gift to one who sought to fight against Jesus (Mark 14:47; Luke 22:51)
- *Drink the cup.* This refers to Jesus’ suffering, death, and martyrdom (Psalm 75:8; Ezek. 23:31-34; Matt. 26:27-28; 39; Mark 14:23-24; 36; Luke 22:42). It does not refer to the actual communal cup from the Last Supper, referred to as the “Holy Grail.” This is the legend of the cup of Jesus and the quest in the Crusades

to find it. This distracted people from Christ and put the emphasis on works. Normally, *cup* refers to Judgment and God's just wrath and/or the consequences of one's action. Here, it is the cross—the consequences of our sin that He bears. Jesus suffered the wrath of God in our place for the payment of our sins (Isa. 51:17-22; Jer. 25:15-17, 28-29; Matt. 20:22; 27:48; Mark 10:39; Luke 9:22; 24:25; John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32-33; 14:23-36; Rom. 3:23-25; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Rev 14:10; 16:19).

- Commander / captain. Meaning an authority over a thousand soldiers, a significant military officer and leader.
- *Arrested Jesus*. They thought they were in control and were seeking to apprehend a peasant criminal; instead, they came face to face with the Creator, the Most Holy God who acted like the “Good Shepherd” (John 10:11-18)!
- *Annas*. He was the high priest from 6 to 15 AD, and as Scripture states, *the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year*. Since the high priests ruled for life, it is assumed the Romans deposed him and probably led from behind the scenes. These positions were controlled by wealthy, priestly families who led by pride and position, not by righteousness. Even though removed from his office, Annas was respected and wielded power; but he did not follow Scripture. The Sanhedrin, a group of 70 of the top, religious/political leaders for Israel that was made up of the chief priests, Sadducees, Pharisees, Scribes, and various elders, and one high priest as the main overseer, was the aristocracy that acted like a Jewish supreme court, and falsely tried Jesus. They made the major religious and civil governing and religious laws, and they dictated how people were to worship God and practice Judaism. They met in the Temple Court or in a secret hall inside called, “Chamber of the Hewn Stone.” This chamber is where they held their clandestine sessions; their own Laws from the Pharisees said these were unlawful meetings and travesties of justice, like meeting late at night and at the eve of a sacred feast day both at this time as well as later on, using false and unreliable witnesses. The entire assembly of 70 could have met, but since it was late, probably just some of the key people gathered inappropriately in secret (Matt. 2:4; 3:7; 26:59-60; Mark 12:18; 14:65; Luke 3:2; 20:27; Acts 4:1-6; 5:21-22).
- *Caiaphas*. He was the high priest that year, the most powerful office a Jew could hold in oppression or not. These men, like the Sanhedrin, were not allowed to judge Roman matters like crimes with a death penalty, thus the reason why they went back and forth in their “lower courts.” They were not following the law of God, rather their political greed and fear-mongering and people-pleasing. We will continue to see people exercising their political will and power without the ability to carry it out until Herod and Pontius Pilate (John 11:49-52).
- *It would be good if one man died for the people*. How prophetic this is, as Jesus did die; the one, innocent Man-God gave it all so that others might live and have eternal life. However, this man's interest was conceit and thus Jesus would not receive a fair trial from such a one.

Devotional Thoughts and Applications

The ultimate battle in life is not with armies and/or lawyers; it is not politics or our exertions. Rather, it is with our will—what we want versus what God has and desires for us. This passage is not about enduring suffering; it is about following God's will regardless of suffering, grief, or any other kind of life strain. This means we surrender our will to His. This means we are focused upon building our lives on God's precepts, not ours. The only way to be a real, authentic follower of our Lord Jesus Christ is to deny what we want and pursue what He wants. This means that knowing who we are and how we are, both to God and also to others around us, is essential. We must never be the stumbling stone, trying to meddle with God's plans for ourselves or others. We must conduct ourselves with utmost integrity, be that person of faith who points to His example. Jesus does not force us to submit and surrender; He models it for us to follow (Psalm 15; John 3:29-30; Gal. 5:24).

We can either say *God, your will be done* or He will say *I will let your will be done*; and then we live with the consequences! Real, spiritual improvement comes from surrendering our will—not opposing or imposing upon His will. The will of God is about learning about Him, following His decrees, and building fruit and character. In seeking that, we can make good decisions and weed out false teachers. Seeking to place Jesus first and foremost so to follow only Him, and thus love, trust, and obey Christ is a mindset and lifestyle (Matt. 6:33; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:17; 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:18; 1 Tim. 2:4; 1 Pet. 2:13-15; 4:19).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Have you ever faced betrayal or disloyalty from a close friend? If so, how did you handle it? How could you have handled it better?
2. Have you fully appreciated or understood what Jesus has done on your behalf? What does it take for you to yield your personal rights and expectations over to God?
3. Judas was one of Jesus' most trusted Disciples; so, why do you think he betrayed Him to the leading priests?
4. Why would Judas be considered the "best" disciple—the best looking and the most promising? Why are a person's looks and position unable to tell us what is really inside him/her? What does?
5. Jesus knew this would happen and did not stop it; why? How does this provide an example for you to submit to the Father?
6. How can you be more aware that our life of contentment is trapped between the walls of our experiences and the ceiling of things we desire? How can you be better at not ignoring the door of the Truth?
7. How have you been instructed and prepared to live out the faith? Do you feel prepared? If not, why not? Why is it important to be instructed with encouragement and joy by the best means and manner? What happens when we neglect this in our churches?
8. How is real joy found in the practice of your faith? What does it mean to enthusiastically show those around you this joy and peace that is only found in Jesus?
9. Why are many Christians distracted from their trust in Christ, but rather seek after money, power, and position? What happens to those who do?
10. Is your confidence, contentment, peace, and harmony with God and others in good shape? If not, what is in the way? What do you need to do to focus on Christ and His will?
11. How can you be better at remaining focused and committed to Christ? What tests your frustrations or distracts you from keeping your focus on God's plan? How can you overcome them?
12. How and why can your spiritual improvement only come from surrendering your will—not opposing or imposing upon God's will? How can you be better at learning about Christ, following His decrees, and building fruit and character?