

The Plot Against the King: Part 2 (John 18:1-27)

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Introduction

1. Last week we introduced the portion of the life of Christ known by John as the “*hour*” toward which His entire life was directed (John 12:23). If these words were all that one read, one would conclude that a great honor was about to be bestowed on the Savior. However, the hour was not one of glory and honor but of darkness and death (v. 24). Jesus said, “*This is your [the rebellious nation’s] hour, and the power of darkness*” (Luke 22:53).

Jesus was advancing the spiritual battle begun in the garden of Eden with the fall of Adam. God’s plan of the ages was to redeem and restore His original purpose for Adam to be His agent for dominion over the works of His hands. To accomplish this restoration, the serpent must be crushed and all power and influence destroyed. This intention was declared in Genesis 3:15. By His obedience “*He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him*” (Colossians 2:15). His obedience was rewarded by resurrection; “*death was swallowed up in victory*” (1 Corinthians 15:55).

2. As we noted last week, we are also in a spiritual battle playing out in this gospel age. As Jesus understood the plan of God in this struggle and acted with resolve and determination, so must we. As Jesus prayed, “*Not as I will but as you will,*” so must we. The evil suffered by Christ and His people demonstrates the pattern of victory (Romans 8:28). Suffering in this conflict results in believers’ being conformed to the image of Christ.

As we consider this last section of John’s Gospel, we focus on the recounting of Jesus’ betrayal at the hands of Judas, the plotting of the hateful and wicked Jews, the cowardice of His disciples, and the political expediency of the Roman procurator Pilate all resulted in a horrible injustice to the innocent Lamb of God.

I. The Rejection of the King

1. John’s Gospel is unique in his attention to the *universal* aspect of the good news, something the Jewish leaders of His day resisted violently.
 - a. Because Jesus was to be the Savior of the *world* (not just the Jews), John shows the Romans’ playing a larger role in the final hours of Christ’s life. There are three reasons for this emphasis: (1) God always intended Jesus would be the Savior of the world (1:29; 3:17; 4:42). (2) The nation of Israel turned a deaf ear to God long before Jesus came into the world (Ezekiel 3:27). (3) The Jews needed the Romans to cooperate in their effort to kill Jesus in order to be rid of Him. This, too, was in God’s will (Acts 2:23).
 - b. The sin of the Jews in plotting against and betraying their King was expected at the beginning. In his prologue, John declared, “*He came to his own [creation], and his own people [Israel] did not receive him*” (John 1:11). This rejection of Jesus was predicted in the parable of the ten minas (Luke 19:11–27), and then, again in the parable of the wicked tenants (Luke 20:9–18), in which the king sent his son to them whom they rejected and killed, clearly a reference to the rejection and killing of the Son of God.
 - c. This rejection was returned on their own heads in divine retribution (Matthew 8:11, 12). Jesus lamented when, in answer to the insurrection of the Jews (the real one, not the trumped-up charges against Jesus), the Romans destroyed their nation in AD 70 (Matthew 23:37–39). Then He predicted the judgment that would come to Jerusalem because of this rejection (Matthew 24:2).

II. The Removal of the King

1. The significance of the first verse of Chapter 18 is that Jesus consecrated Himself for the sake of His own so that they would be sanctified in the truth (17:19). Although He knew what would take place, as shown in verse 4, *“he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron.”* He deliberately walked into their trap.
2. He went there for three reasons.
 - a. First, the Feast of the Passover required all attendees to remain within certain bounds of the city. If Jesus had retired to Bethany, His usual place, they would have been out of bounds, violating feast protocol.
 - b. Second, as noted, John records that Jesus often resorted there (v. 2). One would think that Jesus, understanding what was about to take place, would seek out another place to avoid detection. He refused to alter His habits in order to avoid His enemies, as He had done at other.
 - c. Third, although John does not record Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane, Jesus’ resolve is evident, His having fully understood what was to take place: *“Jesus ... came forward”* (v. 4). He had surrendered fully to the Father’s purpose (Matthew 26:39). He said to Peter, *“shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”* (v. 11). Isaiah described Jesus’ composure and deliberate control of the situation argues His resolve to fulfil His glorious mission (Isaiah 53:10–12).

Application

1. We need to learn how to live as Jesus lived. Hebrews addresses this (Hebrews 12:1–3). We must walk by faith and not by sight, making it our aim to please Him (2 Corinthians 5:7, 9).
2. Even though all the world appears to be collapsing into chaos, we must take heart and trust that Jesus is reigning now. His enemies are being subdued. The Scriptures teach this truth (Colossians 2:15). He will deliver the kingdom to God the Father at the end of the age only after *“destroying every rule and every authority and power”* (I Corinthians 15:24). Thus, we are admonished to *“consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ... We wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience”* (Romans 8:18–25).
3. We must be *“strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. [because] He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son. ... If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel”* (Colossians 1:11–13, 23).