

## Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2010

### 'Jesus Arrested'

**John 18:1-15**

#### **Introduction**

Tonight we leave behind the Upper Room Discourses of John chs.13-17 where Jesus has taken the time to teach his disciples so much about himself, his ministry here on earth and the Holy Spirit he was going to send them. He has also given them that wonderful insight, in ch.17, into how he will be continuing to pray for them once he has left them and gone back to heaven.

He had prayed audibly in their presence, so they had heard him pray about his own glorification, they had heard him pray about their salvation, their preservation, their sanctification, and then he had gone on to pray about their unification as believers, and their ultimate glorification together with Him and with all believers of all time, one day around God's throne in Heaven.

It had been a wonderful prayer, and what a privilege it had been for these disciples to listen in to all that Jesus had prayed for them.

But now we must move on into ch.18.  
First of all let me...

#### **1. Set the Scene (vs.1-3)**

Remember at the end of ch.14 Jesus and his disciples had left the Upper Room and begun to walk out of the city of Jerusalem. Somewhere along the way he must have stopped to pray the prayer of John 17, perhaps somewhere in the Temple Courts, but now we are told in the first verse of John ch.18 that,

*'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.'* (v.1)

The Kidron Valley was the valley just outside the city wall and the Temple precincts. You would cross the Kidron Valley to go to the Mount of Olives just across from the Temple, where you could stop and look back at the grandeur of it all. The Olive Grove was on the foothills of the Mount of Olives, and it is referred to in the other Gospels as the Garden of Gethsemane - the garden where Jesus and his disciples had often gone to pray together.

In fact, that's what John tells us next in v.2, and that's why Judas, the missing disciple, knew exactly where to find Jesus on this occasion. Judas had left the Upper Room back in ch.13:30. So he had missed out on all that wonderful teaching that we have been looking at in the last 4 chapters of John's Gospel.

Instead Judas has been out under the cloak of darkness gathering up a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. He had already done the deal with these men. He had already received his 30 pieces of silver for promising to identify Jesus to them at an appropriate time, so that they could arrest him and lead him away to his execution. The other Gospel writers tell us that he had agreed with them to betray Jesus with a kiss - probably a normal enough greeting in those days, but a kiss, not from a friend, but from a betrayer nevertheless.

So it was Judas who led this group of soldiers and religious leaders into the Olive Grove, in the thick darkness, pierced only by the torches and lanterns they were carrying. So in the dim light, it wouldn't have been easy to see who was who, and that's why the sign of the kiss would be necessary to identify who Jesus was.

But notice they have their weapons with them as well. They don't expect Jesus to come quietly, and they don't expect these 11 disciples (some of them burly fishermen from backwater Galilee) to allow Jesus to be arrested without putting up a fight.

So we have set the scene, but notice what happens next. Jesus comes forward, takes the initiative, and says:

#### **2. Who do you Want? (vs.4-9)**

*'Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, 'Who is it you want?'*

Jesus doesn't shrink from his arrest in any way. In fact in the light of what he has prayed in the previous chapter, we know, that he knew, that his hour had come, the reason why he had come to earth was about to come to pass.

This wasn't just going to be the moment of his humiliating arrest, his mock trial and humiliating crucifixion, he knew that this was ultimately going to be his glorification. He knew all that was going to happen to him, so that's why he moved forward out of the shadows of darkness in the garden that night, and asks the question, *'Who is it you want?'* (v.4)

*'Jesus of Nazareth'* they replied (v.5). That's all he was to them – just a man called Jesus, from backwater Nazareth in Galilee. *'Nazareth, can anything good come out of there?'* That's what they thought of him.

But look what happens next in v.5...

Jesus just said two words in Greek: *'Ego Eime'* – **'I am'** or to make sense in English, as the NIV puts it: *'I am he!'* And notice what happens when he says just those two words, *'Ego Eime'* – they all draw back and fall to the ground! - including Judas Iscariot, the traitor, who was standing there with them!

Even in his moment of humiliating arrest, Jesus, in all his glory as the *'Great I am'* has an overawing effect on his captors. They draw back and fall to the ground. That was the effect of Jesus just speaking those two words: **'I am'**.

This has been the Gospel of *'the Seven I am sayings'* of Jesus of Nazareth.

We have seen how on each of those seven occasions Jesus has made a staggering claim about himself. Each time he has taken the Old Testament name of God upon his lips, claiming to be *'The Great I am'* come in the flesh, and each time he has claimed to be someone, and to be able to do something in terms of salvation for all who will respond to him in faith:

**I am the Bread of Life** – *'He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.'* (John 6:35)

**I am the Light of the World** – *'Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'* (John 8:12)

**I am the Gate for the sheep** – *'Whoever enters through me will be saved.'* (John 10:7 & 9)

**I am the Good Shepherd** – *'The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...no-one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.'* (John 10:11 & 18).

**I am the Resurrection and the Life** – *'He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.'* (John 11:25-26)

**I am the Way, the Truth and the Life** – *'No-one comes to the Father except through me.'* (John 14:6)

**I am the True Vine** – *'You are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.'* (John 15:5)

This was the person that this rabble of soldiers and religious leaders were about to arrest under a cloak of darkness. But do you remember I told you before that as well as the Seven I am sayings of Jesus in John's Gospel, there were also another couple of occasions when these two words 'Ego Eime' (I am) appeared on their own and had a remarkable effect on each occasion?

There was one such instance back in John 8:58, where Jesus said to the Jews in the middle of a heated row: *'Before Abraham was, I am!'* Immediately after that in v.59 they had picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

He was claiming to be the Great Eternal God come in the flesh, and they knew it – that's why they picked up stones to stone him.

But on this occasion in John ch.18:5, this is the last occurrence of this little phrase in all of John's Gospel, and on this occasion those who hear Jesus say it, simply 'fall back in amazement' as we would say, they literally fall to the ground. There is no argument on this occasion, it's not a matter of whether it's true or false anymore – **Jesus just is – He is the Great I am** – He is God come in the flesh – and even his captors have to fall to the ground in his presence, overawed by who he is.

And yet they still go ahead and arrest him. They are long past the point of no return. They have hardened their hearts against all the evidence, and now all they want to do, is get rid of him as quickly as possible.

But in the stunned silence, Jesus again asks the same question: 'Who is it you want?' (v.7). And they answer again, 'Jesus of Nazareth' – that's still all they are prepared to call him. So Jesus says again:  
*'I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.'* (v.8)

It's at this point that John makes the connection with what he had just heard Jesus pray in his great high priestly prayer in the previous chapter. Jesus had prayed, *'I have not lost one of those you gave me.'* (See John 17:12). None of his disciples had *'been lost except the one doomed to destruction'*. That one had now shown himself – it was Judas Iscariot – who was the traitor but here Jesus asks that he be arrested, but let all the other disciples go free. In a very real sense Jesus was answering his own prayer for his disciples. He was still protecting them, preserving them from all harm, as long as he was in the world. Soon that would be the Father's task, through the power of His Holy Spirit to keep the disciples, once Jesus had returned to heaven, but for now, Jesus was still looking out for his own, even when his own life was in danger.

But that now brings us to the final part of this story for tonight. How will the disciples respond? How will they react? What will they do?

### **3. Will they Fight or Follow? (vs.10-15)**

As always, the leader of the disciples is Simon Peter. As always Peter acts before he thinks. He rushes in where angels fear to tread. Simon Peter had a sword, and now he draws it to attack. But before we see what he does with it, some people ask the question at this point, what was Peter doing carrying a sword? He shouldn't have had one, or so they think. But if you turn back to Luke ch.22:31-38 you will see why Peter was carrying a sword on this occasion... For some reason Jesus had told the disciples to bring 2 with them!

Jesus had also just told Peter before going to this Olive Grove, that before morning would come, he would deny all knowledge of Jesus three times! So Peter was out to prove Jesus wrong. Peter was ready for action, He was full of bravado. This was his moment, and he doesn't miss it!

He drew his sword over his head, and before you knew it, there was an ear lying on the ground! Peter, the leader of the disciples, had just sliced off the ear of a servant of the High Priest! A man called Malchus (v.10).

It's *Doctor* Luke, naturally enough, who tells us in Luke 22:51 that Jesus quickly stepped in and performed a miracle at this point, touching the man's ear and healing him instantly! So even in his moment of arrest, he still performs a miracle of healing on one of his enemies, and still they don't change their minds about him! There is none so blind as those who *will not* see!

Jesus simply told Peter to put his sword away, saying that he was prepared to drink the cup the Father was now giving him – the cup of suffering & anguish for you and for me, as he would soon go to the cross to die for our sin.

**Peter had chosen to fight, but now he decides to follow:**

In v.12 the detachment of soldiers, with its commander, and the Jewish officials, arrest Jesus, bind him, and bring him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high-priest that year. These were corrupt priests. They had become a dynasty in their own right. They were far from what the priesthood of the Old Testament had been or should have been.

They were puppet priests put into position by the King Herod of the day, and yet Caiaphas unwittingly had made the prediction back in John 11:49-51 that it would be better if one man died for the people, than that the Romans would come and overrun their nation. He spoke of substitutionary atonement without realising what he was saying.

That's exactly what was going to happen. Jesus was going to die in the place of men and women, not only of the Jewish nation, but in your place and mine as well. He was about to die as our substitute. In those hours of darkness on the cross, he was going to take upon himself all your sin and mine, and he was going to pay the price for our sins, he was going to die in our place.

And so it is better for us, that one man died for us, than that we all died for our sins ourselves, because now, by trusting in the finished work of Christ on the cross, you and I can be set free from our sins and from the penalty of sin that each one of us deserved, eternal death, and we can know eternal life instead. The next verse says, '*Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus*' right into the High Priest's courtyard.

Peter had tried to fight it, but now he was resigned to following Jesus.

Which is it for you? Are you still **fighting** it; or will you begin to **follow** Jesus?