

# The Betrayal in the Garden – *John 18:1-11*

**Introduction** – John’s account of the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus agrees in the main points with the Synoptics, but John again brings forth different and stirring details the others do not have. John’s signs were chosen that the reader might believe (John 20:30-31). Particularly, he wrote so that the reader would believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. Over and over we have seen how Jesus was never waylaid by evil men but that He was always acting in obedience to His Father. As John writes, he emphasizes many details that reveal Jesus as the new Adam, the perfect Son of God, the One foretold throughout the Old Testament (Heb 1:1-2).

**A Particular Brook Where There Was a Garden** (v1) – The Brook Kidron is first mentioned when King David crossed over it weeping while fleeing Jerusalem and the rebellion of his son, Absalom (2 Sam 15:23). Now a faithful Son of David crosses over as Jerusalem celebrates with the Passover lamb while scheming to kill the Lamb of God. In fact, with many thousands of lambs being sacrificed for Passover, the Brook Kidron, a viaduct out of the Temple, would be running with the blood of sacrificial lambs.

John doesn’t tell us that this garden is the Garden of Gethsemane; he simply records it as “*a garden*.” Jesus enters a garden to redeem His people from their sin and rebellion. It was in a garden where the first man fell into sin. The contrast is striking. The Garden of Eden was the sanctuary where Adam would meet with God. After the Fall, the Tabernacle and then the Temple, became the garden-sanctuary. There was a garden where Jesus was crucified and where He was buried (19:41), and it was in that garden that Jesus would be mistaken for a gardener (20:15) which wasn’t really a mistake. The New Jerusalem is a garden-city where a pure river of life proceeds from the throne while trees grow on both sides yielding magical fruit and leaves that heal the nations (Rev 22:1-3).

**Israel and the Gentiles Led by the Betrayer** (vv2-3) – Once in the garden, John omits the garden prayer (instead he had focused on the high priestly prayer of Ch 17), and the sleepiness of Peter, James and John. Instead, he notes that Judas would have known where Jesus would go that night, “*for Jesus often met there with His disciples*.” Jesus wasn’t hiding in the garden. He was waiting. And Judas shows up. He had received a “*detachment*,” the Greek word indicating a large contingent of Roman soldiers, hundreds of men, along with temple officers of the Sanhedrin and some Pharisees. These are cobelligerents at best, all with one common, mutual hatred of and threat from – Jesus. The chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command in the week leading up to Passover that anyone who knew where Jesus was should report it (11:57). It seems that Judas and the Jewish authorities convinced the Romans that Jesus posed a threat to both the Jews and the Romans and so they conspired together (Psalm 2:1-3), setting up the perfect plan of God (Psalm 2:4-8).

**Do You Know Who You Are Dealing With?** (vv4-9) – The kiss of Judas is not recorded by John. Instead, the confidence and power of Christ is exalted. He knew all things that would come upon Him (we know from the Synoptics He had prayed, “*your will be done*”). The enemies brought lanterns and torches (to find those who would run and hide in the darkness of the garden) and weapons (expecting a fight), but Jesus went forward, stepping away from His disciples, and said to them, “*Whom are you seeking?*” They answer, “*Jesus of Nazareth*,” touting their ignorance. They don’t know what He looks like and they do not know Who He is.

The Gospel of John is the Gospel of the I AMs. In John we read that Jesus said, “*I AM the bread of life*,” “*I AM the light of the world*,” “*I AM the door of the sheep*,” “*I AM the Good Shepherd*,” “*I AM the resurrection and the life*,” “*I AM the way, the truth, and the life*,” “*I am the true vine*,” and to the Jewish authorities who thought they were something because Abraham was their father, Jesus said, “*...before Abraham was, I AM*” to which they took up stones to throw at Him. It is in this gospel alone that we hear the answer Jesus gives to those looking for the man, Jesus of Nazareth: “*I AM*.” What are we to see in the response, hundreds of men brought to their knees by the name of God? I am reminded of the story of Ahaziah, king of Israel, who sent a captain with his fifty men up a hill to call upon Elijah to come down (2 Kings 1:7-14). And then another. And then another.

Jesus certainly made clear that his life would not be forced from Him but that he laid it down Himself. And here, in striking them down but not striking them dead, He also gave them a demonstrable call and opportunity to repent. But their hearts were hardened with Judas. However, with His authority demonstrated, He asks again and this time in His reply He commands them to let his disciples go their way, to which they comply.

**Misguided Zeal and the Cup of Wrath** (vv10-11) – Peter, always impulsive, steps forward to attack, emboldened by what He saw Jesus do. Probably seeking to sever his head, Peter misses and cuts off his ear. John tells us this is Malchus, the slave of the chief priest. The name “*Malchus*” means “*destined to reign*” and Luke tells us that Jesus reached out and healed his ear. The inclusion of his name suggests that he was alive and known among those to whom John was writing, indicating that Jesus did more than heal his physical ears.

More importantly are Jesus’ words to Peter. Already He had rebuked Peter for thinking he could stand in the way of Jesus’ plans (Matt 16:31-33) and now He had to do so again. The cup which Jesus referred to is the cup of God’s judgment and wrath. Israel had drunk from this cup (Isaiah 51:17) and Jeremiah spoke of God’s wrath in terms of this cup of judgment for His enemies (Jer 25:15-28). The enemies of God will drink this cup down to the dregs (Psalm 75:8).

**Conclusion** – David fled across the Kidron to flee his accusers; Jesus crossed the Kidron to face His accusers. Adam was a gardener who did not protect His bride. Jesus is the better Gardener who protected His disciples. Both were kings and Jesus is the better husband/king who laid down His life for His bride.

Judas knew all these OT stories and Judas had spent years with Jesus. He had been with Jesus in that same garden enough times to know that’s where He would be that night. This is what a calloused heart looks like – one who betrays Jesus at the place where he had earlier participated in fellowship and prayer with Jesus. By the Word of God, hard hearts can be hardened (Rom 9:17-18). If you sit here with a hard heart, unmoved by the name of Jesus, I pray God would not harden that hard heart of yours.

But at the name of Jesus, the great I AM, every knee will bow (Phil 2:10) and they will because of the powerful name of Jesus. Every knee bows at the name of Jesus because everyone is humbled before Him in their sin. All are enemies of God and so all are handed the cup of wrath. But if you have heard the name of Jesus with ears that have been opened, with hearts that have been made new and soft, it is because He took your cup of wrath and drank it – all the way to the dregs. That’s what He did on the Cross. And instead, you are handed the cup of blessing and told to drink. It is the cup of His blood, the forgiveness of your sins, and the reconciliation with your heavenly Father.

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