

Come and See: Encounters with Jesus in the Gospel of John
Part 9: "Who's Really in Charge?"

November 5, 2023
By Pastor Ben Froese

John 18:1-14

¹ When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

² 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 detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns, and weapons.

⁴ Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

⁵ "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

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

⁷ Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they said.

⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then 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."

¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

¹¹ Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

¹² Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him ¹³ and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. ¹⁴ Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

I. The Desire for Control

In verse 3, we see that Judas, one of those in Jesus' inner circle who had betrayed him, leads this band of people to come and arrest Jesus. Judas knew where Jesus was, and as this detachment of Roman soldiers along with officials from the Jewish religious leaders come together, they do so as a powerful force. Ready to remove Jesus. Ready to take him to be killed.

"If we let [Jesus] go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation." (John 11:48)

Ultimately, why would the religious leaders want to kill Jesus? Control! They want to preserve the system. They want to protect their nation. And the thought is that this is the way to do that.

Jesus threatens to disrupt their religious system. And we might also miss Jesus because he threatens to disrupt our personal lives too.

And at the end of this morning's text, we see that they do arrest Jesus. It might seem like those who came to arrest Jesus are the ones in control here.

II. No Surprises

The gospel writer's emphasis is that someone else is really in charge of this whole thing.

Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?" (John 18:4)

Jesus knows all that will happen already!

III. A Declaration of Identity

Jesus repeatedly states "I am he" (vv. 5, 6, 8).

At one level, we have this bold act of identifying himself as the one they are looking for. Jesus isn't shrinking back. Jesus isn't trying to control or manipulate this situation in a way that will benefit his own safety or well-being. He flat-out identifies himself as the one they are looking to arrest.

In the Greek text, there is no word for "he" here. Jesus says *ego eimi*, a phrase that in other places is simply translated "I am" (e.g., John 8:58).

The writer likely wants us to see again that Jesus is the Great I Am, that He is God in the flesh.

IV. Power Used in the Right Way

Jesus answered, *"I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go."* (John 18:8)

Jesus uses the few words that he can share here to prioritize looking out for his disciples – he has their back.

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." (Philippians 2:3-4)

V. The Most Remarkable Voluntary Act

Jesus commanded Peter, *"Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"* (John 18:11)

Jesus, as the one in complete charge of this whole scene, willingly chooses that he will allow himself to be arrested and later drink the cup of God's judicial wrath.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11)

"No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." (John 10:18)

He will take our sins and the punishment for them on himself. Voluntarily. Out of love.

Life Group Discussion and Reflection Questions

Open Up

1. What are some ways that people today try to be “in control”? Would you describe yourself as someone who likes to be “in control” of things?

Dig In

1. Read through the text, **John 18:1-14**. What are some things that first stand out to you as you read this?
2. The writer tells us that Jesus knows all that will happen to him and emphasizes that he is the one in charge of this whole situation. What do you think it means for Jesus to be “in charge” in our world today? How does that change the way we perceive the world around us?
3. Is power generally viewed as a positive or negative thing in our culture today? How does Jesus use his power and authority in this story? How is that instructive for us?

Prayer

Take some time to share prayer requests. Give thanks to Jesus that he is “in charge” of our lives. Pray that he would give each of us the grace to trust him with whatever we’re going through.