

John 18:1-14 “A Journey Into Glory”

Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor
Michael Gunn on Date August 26th, 2007

“Perhaps we might be willing to say to ourselves that it is not at all impossible that some Jews, even leading Jews, recommended the death of Jesus to Pilate. We are averse to saying this to ourselves, for so total has been the charge against us that we have been constrained to make a total denial.”

Jewish Scholar Samuel Sandmel

Intro

Today we flip a switch and change directions. Jesus has spent His last moments with His disciples, and now He is ready to face His death. Although John does not include the agony in the garden (As do the synoptics), he has already displayed Christ's heavy heart in John 12:27ff. But perhaps the harshest debate in relationship to the passion of Jesus Christ is the modern day charge that it is severely ill-informed to say the least, and anti-Semitic at worse. The belief is that these stories are the smear campaigns of 2nd century Christianity. One of the biggest charges of scholarship, is that the Mishnah (Oral interpretation of the Torah) forbade night trials in capital cases, and that the trial must take place over a 2 day period, and that there would be a time for private interrogation of the witnesses. These among other things have led some to believe that this trial is historical nonsense. However much of the argument fails to take in account the following points.

1. Much of the Mishnaic stipulations were theoretical and were not obeyed law.
2. There is ample historical precedent that allowed the “legal restrictions” to be broken if the “hour demanded it.” If they feared mob violence for instance, it would behoove them to speed up the process.
3. The gospel itself recognizes the irregularities. Religious and political zeal is often the culprit behind expediency and oppression.
4. It is questionable how many of the Mishnaic stipulations (Compiled in AD 200) should have been interpreted retroactively.

The problem we have currently is that we have interpreted the gospels through a holocaust lens. There is no doubt that Christian anti-Semitism is culpable in the horrors of the holocaust, but we cannot revise biblical history because of these injustices. The fact is that those in power often persecute those that disagree with them. We have seen this all through history, and almost no one is exempt from the temptation. This is what Christianity did to Jews when they got in to places of power. The biblical reality is that both the Jews and the gentiles were culpable (**Acts 4:27**); we are culpable (**2 Corinthians 5:21** cf. **John 1:29**), and God was completely control of His death (**Acts 2:23**). We should never look to the Jew as the reason Jesus was killed! His death has nothing to do with anti-Semitism or racism; it is a theological, historical issue, and the fact is most of the players in the NT (Including Jesus and His disciples) were Jewish. It is simply not a racial matter! We must also never in any way hold to any anti-Semitic point of view. We are all sinners saved by the grace of God whether we are Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free, black or white!

Today we are going to take a look at Jesus' arrest and make a few **observations** in regards to the symbolism, character and actions of Jesus' betrayal and arrest.

From the Head...

The Symbolic Importance of Jesus' Death (John 18:1-2)

In the first two verses there is some interesting symbolism highlighting the ministry of Jesus Christ. After the dinner and leaving the city, he “*Crossed the Kidron valley*,” which would have been the normal path to go up to the Mount of Olives. In so doing, He would have had to cross the Kidron River, which is no longer in existence today. He crossed that river on the day that the priests would have been sacrificing the “Sacrificial Lambs” for the upcoming Passover. The estimates on the sacrifices are over 200,000. The blood flowing out from behind the temple mount would have easily flowed down the valley and into the Kidron brook. Jesus would have literally had to cross over the brook, reminding Him of the blood that He would soon spill on behalf of humanity (see **John 18:4** also **John 1:29, 36**). The symbolism does not stop there. Verse one reminds us that Jesus headed to an “Olive Grove.” The other accounts tell us that he went to the garden called Gethsemane (**Matthew 26:36; Mark 14:32; Luke 22:39**), which was an olive grove. Luke tells us that this was His custom, and John makes it clear in verse 2 that He had often gone there with His disciples when He was in Jerusalem. While there are many uses of Olives, it is a universal symbol of peace. The symbolism is clear. It is only through the blood of Jesus that we have peace at all with God (**Romans 5:1** cf. **John 14:27; 16:33**). In Christ we have “Shalom!” We are forgiven, acquitted of our sins (Past, present and future), and we are made children (Adopted) of God. Our identity shifts from one who was separated from God, and in rebellion against Him, one who is at peace with God, and Him/herself. We are brought across the valley of the shadow of death, where we deserved death, but His rod and staff comforted us, and led us to the still waters of peace with God. We no longer strive to be “Good!” We are good because of Him!

The Compassion of Jesus in the Face of Betrayal (John 18: 2-9)

In John 17:12 Jesus prayed that He had lost none of those that His Father had given Him. Though it appears He was talking about their spiritual condition, it highlights His concern for His people. This is Jesus living out Philippians 2:3-7. This also highlights Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:43-47. In spite of the fact that he is being betrayed by one of His closest friends, and another friend is about to deny Him, He is thinking not of revenge, or self-pity, but of their needs. How easy is it for us to become cynical and bitter because people have hurt us? Are we still called to love people? Do we have a right to be bitter? Does this give us a right to be mad at God, and fail to do the ministry that God has called us to? NO! We are called to love, not because they are lovable, but because God loves them, and He has loved us first, so that our new hearts could begin to love those that hate us! It is a complete reversal of the world's way of living!

The Power and Authority of Jesus' Revolution (John 18:3, 10-11)

As we have seen before in John, Jesus acts with authority and power, but His power is not a normal one. First we see that when Judas assembles a posse to arrest Jesus, he brings forth an army. A "Detachment" (Speiran) was at least 200 men, and possibly up to 1000 men. He also brought Jewish temple police to help arrest Jesus. The powerful use their power to dominate. In this world the oppressed (Once they gain power) use their new power to dominate those that once dominated them. They came with weapons, when Jesus had none. Mark 14:48 (see also **Luke 22:52-53**) gives us insight into the incredulity of Jesus at this fact. Why would they come with weapons when He was laying His own life down (**John 10:18**)? Jesus' revolution does not include the normal political, religious or economic strong-arming. His power is a new kind of power. Everyone, including religious leaders, use power bases to gain power to make change, but in reality nothing changes, because the foundation is the same. Jesus came to change that in the heart of believers. Free us from the need for power, so that we could operate from the margins with the power of His Spirit, and the ethic of His love. John tells us that the guards fell down when they saw who He really was. We're not sure what that was all about, except the fact that a glimpse of His glory was most likely revealed (see **Exodus 33:17-23; 34:6-8**). Jesus revolution of love is emphasized in the story of Peter cutting off Malchus' ear. Peter was still of the school of power, and hate, and force. Jesus knew that Peter's acts were self-seeking, because He still failed to realize why Jesus had come in the first place; to die on behalf of sinful people. Interesting, but the name Malchus means "King or Kingdom." Peter was willing to kill of the very reason why Jesus came for his own gain politically. How often does the church desire to raise it's place in cultural power, instead of living out God's vision for His new kind of kingdom here on earth? Peter also failed to realize who Jesus was. He could have called down 6,000 angels in support (**Matthew 26:53**), but He didn't for a reason.

...To the Heart

It is all too easy to see Jesus' death for our own purposes, and not willing to submit to Him and His kingdom. Why did Jesus die? Why has He called you into His kingdom? These are questions we must continuously ask ourselves if we are going to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that we experience and know the depth of God's love, and His passion for His own glory, so that we could gain our joy and our peace through His work on the cross, and we could get off the treadmill of performance and works in order to try and please God. He is pleased in His Son!

For Further Reading: "The New Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of John" William Barclay; "The Gospel of John," F.F. Bruce; "The New Testament Commentary: The Gospel of John," William Hendriksen; "Preaching the Word; John: That You May Believe," R. Kent Hughes; "The NIV Application Commentary: John," Gary M. Burge; "The Pillar NT Commentary: The Gospel According to John," D.A. Carson; "The Word Biblical Commentary on John" George R. Beasley-Murray

Next Weeks Verses: John 18:12–19:16

To dialogue with the sermon go to www.sermonrant.wordpress.com and express your thoughts