

Staring Down the Lion

Portraits of Jesus - John 18

March 21, 2021

Satan, Judas, a fallen government and a fallen religion all combine to hurl their absolute worst at Jesus Christ, but this is where God does His absolute best—the redemption of man.

This week pay attention to the symbolism in the events leading to His crucifixion.

DAY 1: The Garden – the place of submission and obedience.

John 18:1 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.

1. Jerusalem was crowded because of the Passover. Jesus wanted a quiet place to wrestle with His coming death.
2. He goes to a place just outside the walls of Jerusalem to the Garden of Gethsemane. It is here that He will pray, and do what we might call verbal processing, wrestling with His upcoming arrest, torture, crucifixion, and death.
3. The symbolism of a garden plays significantly in the bible.
 - a. Human life began in the Garden of Eden.
 - b. Adam and Eve sinned in the garden and were kicked out of the garden.
 - c. History will end in another garden.
4. The Garden of Eden was the garden of disobedience. The Garden of Gethsemane was the garden of obedience and submission. The garden to come will be a garden of delight and satisfaction forever.
5. Matthew and Mark record the details that happened in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus took Peter, James and John with Him for support and encouragement as He knew His arrest and torture were imminent.

*Matthew 26:39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, **if it is possible**, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."*

*Matthew 26:42 He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, **if it is NOT possible** for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."*

6. Approximately 15 minutes pass between Jesus' prayer in verse 39 and verse 42. What happens in verse 42?
7. Jesus asked God to let this cup of suffering pass by, unless it was absolutely necessary for the redemption of man. It was. While Jesus was in anguish, the three disciples repeatedly fell asleep.
8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: The kiss

John 18:2 Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. ³ So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

1. Judas arranged to have a number of soldiers with clubs and swords brought for the arrest. This is what existentialists would call “the theatre of the absurd.”
2. Even after spending three and a half years with Jesus Christ, Judas was ignorant about Jesus, His character and His mission.

John 18:4 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.)

3. Think of how you or anyone might respond in this scene. Would you run away when you saw the soldiers coming across the valley with their torches? Would you plead with them for mercy? Would you try to logically state why there was a big misunderstanding?

4. What do you sense in Jesus’ attitude and soul in John 18:4-5?

Matthew 26:48 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." ⁴⁹ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

5. One of the great evils of man is the ability to rationalize evil under the guise of necessity, and then maneuver how you accomplish the evil by putting yourself in the best possible light, perhaps even looking noble.
6. This is treachery in the cruelest of way, a kind of perverseness that only hell would think up. Publicly look the part of a loyal and devoted follower while privately selling out your teacher for money.

John 26:50 Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

7. What strikes you about Jesus’ response?

8. What strikes you about His attitude and soul?

John 18:6 When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷ Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ "I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "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."

9. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: The sword

1. Its night. The guards, with clubs, swords and torches are about to arrest Jesus. Judas, a disciple of Jesus, along with Simon Peter, sells Jesus out in disgusting treachery. Peter snaps.

John 18:10 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.)

2. Jesus had previously warned the disciples that all of this would happen. He would be arrested. Jesus also told them that their “weapons” were not swords. That was not how God builds His kingdom!

3. Instead of running away like rats like the rest of the disciples did, Peter courageously takes a stand, but for what?

- a. Peter fought the wrong enemy.
- b. He used the wrong weapon.
- c. He acted out of the wrong motivation.
- d. He accomplished the wrong result.

4. Why did Peter fail so miserably?

- a. When Jesus warned Peter that he would deny Jesus, Peter argued.
- b. Peter slept when he should have been praying.
- c. Peter talked when he should have been listening.
- d. Peter used the same weapons that the soldiers used.

5. Malchus was a servant attached to the arresting party. From Peter’s point of view Malchus was “the enemy.” We attack enemies! Did Malchus lay his hands on Jesus? We aren’t told the details. What is astonishing is Jesus’ response. He reaches down, picks up the ear of Malchus and places it back, re-attached and working on Malchus’ head. Is that how we’re supposed to deal with our enemies?

Romans 12:19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

6. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 4: The cup

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

1. This should sound familiar. We just read about Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane about this very thing!
2. The “cup” represents several things in scripture.
 - a. The cup can represent the wrath of God poured out on sin and evil. Though modern man claims to not believe in a God of wrath, we do want there to be justice. How often people breathe a sigh of relief when “justice prevailed.” God’s wrath is meant to put a stop to evil.
 - b. The cup can represent the cup of suffering.
 - c. The cup can represent the will of God that must be accepted.

*Matthew 26:42 He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, **if it is NOT possible** for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."*

3. Jesus is using the metaphor of the cup in all three meanings.
 - a. The wrath of God will fall on Him on the cross for the sin of man.
 - b. He will go through incredible physical suffering and spiritual suffering as He is separated from God the Father during those awful hours.
 - c. He is wrestling to obey what He knows to be the will of God.

The fire

4. Peter has surreptitiously followed the arresting soldiers and Jesus, hiding in the shadows, and is huddled over a nighttime fire just outside the house of interrogation. Jesus had warned Peter about this very thing, yet, Peter, trusting in his devotion to Jesus, walked right into temptation.
5. Two people recognized Peter in the dark shadows and flickering firelight. Peter denied knowing Jesus. But then a third person recognized Peter.

John 18:26 One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?"

²⁷ Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

6. Matthew’s account records that Peter cursed and swore. He didn’t curse in the way people “curse” today. He swore an oath to the truth of not knowing Jesus to the point of “may a curse fall on me if I am telling a lie.”
7. The cock crowed, just as Jesus predicted. Jesus looks out onto the courtyard at that moment and Peter and Jesus’ eyes meet. Peter flees and weeps bitterly.
8. The rooster crowing and eye contact with Jesus was not a guilt trip. It was a reminder of the promise Jesus had made to Peter after he denied Jesus. It is a promise filled with hope!

Luke 22:32 But afterward, I will restore you...

9. What strikes you about today’s devotional?

DAY 5: The trials

1. Jesus is then subjected to six different judicial “trials.” Three were held by Jewish tribunals and three were held by Roman authorities.
2. The “prisoner” was beaten while He was interrogated. Authorities who had no right to preside over a trial did so anyway. False and lying witnesses were utilized.
3. The Jewish trials were conducted first by Annas, the high priest, second with Caiaphas with some of the members of the Sanhedrin that night, and third, early the next morning with the full Sanhedrin present. They wanted Jesus killed, but Roman law forbade Judea, the Jewish leaders from performing an execution.
4. While the Jewish trials had to do with blasphemy and claiming to be God, the charges they presented to the Roman authorities were “straw man arguments” that had a chance of getting the Romans to execute Jesus. Here were the charges. (1) He led the nation astray. (2) He told the people to not pay taxes to Caesar. (3) He claimed to be a king, which threatened Roman rule.
5. The Roman authorities also conduct three trials, two by Pilate and one by King Herod.
6. Pilate was in office from A.D. 26-36. Pilate is in a difficult position. If he allows a crisis to happen in Judea, he may lose this position in the Roman Empire. But as we’ll see, Pilate repeatedly sees no fault in Jesus, let alone for anything requiring the death penalty. Just a few days earlier, Pilate had witnessed the Jewish people, not the leaders, hailing Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on what we call Palm Sunday. If Pilate had Jesus executed would the mob come after him and complain to Caesar?
7. As a result of these competing forces and loyalties, Pilate was indecisive, feckless, and wishy-washy. He tried to stand on principle, but expedience won out.
John 18:33 Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"
John 18:36 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."
³⁷ "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."
8. Jesus’ followers were known to have had *one* sword. One. And the “swordsmen” was actually a fisherman. Hardly an insurrection. His followers were not soldiers. There was no physical kingdom. This kingdom existed in the individual hearts of Jesus’ followers.
9. What strikes you from Jesus’ response to Pilate?
10. What strikes you from today’s devotional?