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- [0 : 00] Let us now turn back to the passage that we read, the Gospel according to John, in chapter 18.
- And we may read at verse 2, Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples.
- So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.
- And I'd like to set three thoughts before you from the word there. There, in verse 2, and there, in verse 3.
- Because there, it seems to me, the first thought, Christ reveals his regal, authoritative power.
- [1 : 13] Secondly, there, Christ reminds Peter and us of his redemptive purpose in the world.
- And thirdly, there, Christ restores the ruptured year of Malchus. So there, he reveals, he reminds, and he restores the three R's.
- That's easy, surely, to remember. In an earlier chapter, John tells us how Jesus and the disciples gathered together to the upper room.
- It was to be their last time of fellowship and instruction prior to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. And you will remember from your knowledge of the Bible how Jesus took the role of a menial servant in that small gathering.
- And that, of course, is highly significant because he came to serve. And that is reinforced by his actions in that room with the disciples.
- [2 : 34] Something that seems to have been indelibly engraved on the mind of John. As he recalls these events when he is writing his gospel as an old man.
- Remember how he speaks of Jesus washing his disciples' feet. And he also tells of how they observed the Passover meal. And in relating that information, John tells us how Jesus is well aware of the thoughts and intentions of Judas Iscariot.
- When he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him.
- Jesus said to him, what you are going to do, do quickly. Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that because Judas had the money bag.
- Jesus was telling him, buy what we need for the feast or that he should give something to the poor. So after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out.
- [3 : 50] And it was night. There was night.
- In their lives. At that particular moment. And there was approaching night. And the life of the Savior himself.
- As he entered into the darkness of Gethsemane on the cross. So we know from the Bible that how Judas went to the religious authorities and agreed with them.

His act of betrayal. And in this chapter that we read together, we are told of the arrest of Jesus. How the church, the Jewish religious leaders and the state, Roman power.

How they came together. So that's a powerful combination. Church and state uniting together with one aim. To arrest the Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 17] And so we are told of a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees. Come along with Judas to arrest Jesus.

And that brings me. That's the background to my first thought. There Christ reveals his regal authoritative power.

And the picture that is set before us by the gospel writers is that a large group came with the intention of arresting the Lord Jesus.

We are told they came prepared to meet any resistance that might be offered. Matthew tells us a great crowd with swords and clubs came to arrest him.

Some are of the opinion that there were hundreds of soldiers in this band. The word that is translated band speaks of a unit of a legion.

[6 : 19] Now, in a legion there were 6,000 soldiers. So a unit would be one tenth. 600 soldiers.

Commentators are of the view that there could be as many as 200 soldiers in this group. Jew and Gentile coming together to arrest the Savior of the world.

To arrest the one who came to break down the dividing wall of hostility. United in their animosity and hostility to Christ.

The fact that they had lanterns and torches could suggest that they thought they may have to conduct a search to find the Lord Jesus.

Remember, this was the time of the Passover. And the Passover was always held at the time of the full moon. It may have been cloudy.

[7 : 23] The moon may have been obscured. We don't know. Not something we are told. The fact that they were in possession of swords and clubs may not just tell us that they thought they would meet with resistance.

But also it could indicate their own sense of fear in coming to apprehend Jesus. The impression that you get is that the world felt intimidated by Jesus.

Certainly intimidated by the holiness of the life of Jesus. And given the numbers that were coming to arrest him and the weaponry they have.

You would think they were coming to arrest a highly dangerous armed criminal. He himself states in Matthew's account, Have you come out against a robber with swords and clubs to capture me?

Day after day I sat in the temple teaching. And you did not seize me. In other words, he is rebuking them for their cowardice.

[8 : 38] Why did you not come to arrest me during the day when I taught in the temple? Why indeed not come then? And the answer that we get from the scriptures or implied from the scriptures, because they feared the reaction of the people.

And so here they come under the cloak of darkness. Why? With swords and clubs? Because Jesus wasn't armed, nor did he use arms.

And in some ways Jesus is shaming them for the manner in which they come. Judas, John tells us, who betrayed him was standing with them.

There are three brief references to the name of Judas in the context. Remember the conversation in the upper room. What was divulged?

Especially to John when he asked the question as to who should betray Christ. Watch my hand, says the Lord. When he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

[9 : 47] And John in these brief references, I believe, is telling us how this Satan-controlled man, how he now operates.

He has revealed his true self and he now stands with those who are opposed to Jesus. He was there as a guide for us, John tells us. Judah also knew the place for Jesus often met there with his disciples.

John leaves out some detail that the other gospel writers gives us. He doesn't tell us of the kiss with which Judas identified and betrayed the Savior.

John also in his account leaves out the intense and agonizing wrestling that took place in Gethsemane. Although John himself was there, albeit a stone's throw away.

It's as if John is approaching his recording of the events from another angle altogether, wanting us, the readership, to see that Christ was in full control of what was taking place.

[10 : 59] This was not unexpected. It wasn't. It was something that he anticipated. Now was the betrayal of Judas unexpected.

He knew it was to occur. There were events that took place. These events took place according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.

And they were ordered minutely. And so the person that they sought comes forward to meet them, writes John. Jesus knowing all that would happen to him, to emphasize the completeness of the knowledge of Christ.

And he comes with the question, whom do you seek? Yes, they have lanterns and torches. But I believe many of the soldiers would not recognize him.

They would still need some confirmation of his identity. And probably this takes place in this narrative at the end of verse 5, when John records Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.

[12 : 08] But what John wants us to see, I believe, is that nothing lies outside of the jurisdiction of Jesus. Do you notice how John wants to emphasize that point?

When the mob say that they are looking for Jesus, Jesus the Nazarene, Jesus says in verse 5, I am he. In the original Greek, it is just I am.

And when I say that is important, will you agree with me? I am. Jesus is making reference to the divine name that occurs, first of all, in the book of Exodus.

Several times in his gospel, John has drawn attention to how Jesus begins a sentence of personal identification and declaration of his identity with the words, I am.

I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. I am the door. I am the good shepherd. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth, and the life. And does it not remind us of how the Lord spoke to Moses from out of the burning bush that proved to have such drawing power to the shepherd who was looking after his father-in-law's flock so that we read, I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.

[13 : 46] And you remember how he is addressed and when he inquires as to who is addressing him. I am who I am.

The Lord of lords and King of kings. And notice how Jesus, how John records the response to Jesus when he says, I am.

When Jesus said to them, I am, they drew back and fell to the ground. They are overcome by the regal, authoritative declaration of his identity.

His presence made them draw back and fall to the ground. And do you see what John is saying? As he describes this incident in one of the most vulnerable places in the earthly life and ministry of the Lord Jesus.

Perhaps only the temptation in the wilderness comes close to this. In the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus is arrested by soldiers with swords and clubs and John is saying, do you see this?

[15 : 01] This is God here. This is the Lord of glory here. Remember of Psalm, David speaks in Psalm 27, and though it's not a messianic psalm, you could apply the words of David to the Lord here, when evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall.

So there in the garden, Christ reveals his regal, authoritative power. There is, there is, as it were, an emission of a momentary flash of the brightness that was veiled for the most part.

But it was enough to prostrate with a strange awe these soldiers. And the application of this first point, if but a little glimpse of the majestic regal power and authority of Christ during the days of his humiliation can have this profound effect on those who have rejected him, what will it be like when he appears in the glory, majesty, power, and exaltation, of his exaltation.

Does the reaction of these people, who are mainly military personnel, people you would not expect to be easily frightened, does the reaction not tell us something of the power, the authoritative power, of this person who says, I am he.

And so the question for you and me is this, have we been reconciled to this Jesus of power? Do we tremble in his presence?

[17 : 09] Are we apprehensive at meeting with this Jesus of power? The Jesus who even with a statement of self-identity and declaration can cause military personnel to fall back and be prostrated before him?

Are you afraid of meeting with this powerful figure? Because if you have not been reconciled, then you need urgently to flee to Christ while we are still in a day of grace and a day of mercy.

Because here we have, as it were, a picture in miniature of what will take place on the day of his most glorious appearing when he is accompanied by the angelic host.

All who until then have stubbornly refused to acknowledge Christ in their own individual lives, who have defiantly refused to worship him, yet when he appears in glorious, triumphant majesty inevitably must bow down before him.

As the Bible reminds us at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

[18 : 58] there will be no exceptions to that. Not one. Well, it seems to me that there is much encouragement here too for the believer because Jesus demonstrates the power he exercises over evil and unbelief, idolatry and all forms of wickedness, even over all the powers of darkness itself.

And perhaps some of you may be familiar with the hymn writer who expresses it like this, Be still, my soul. The Lord is on thy side.

Be still, my soul. The best, thy best, thy heavenly friend, through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul. Thy God doth undertake to guide the future as he has the past. Be still, my soul, when dearest friends depart and all is darkened in the veil of tears.

Then shalt thou better know his love, his heart, who comes to soothe thy sorrow and thy fears. Be still, my soul, thy Jesus.

[20 : 23] can repay. And you notice under this heading he speaks these words, I told you that I am he, so if you seek me, let these men go.

There is a further note of royal authoritative power in these words. Notice how protective he is of his disciples in this potentially inflammatory, hostile, and dangerous situation.

Christ is not just demonstrating his perfect submission to the will of God the Father and his voluntary submission to the death on the cross, but he demonstrates that he is indeed the good shepherd in his protective care of his own, his disciples.

And it seems to me if I understand the events related here, that it may also have been in the minds of those who came to arrest Jesus to also arrest his followers.

And that may be a further reason for this demonstration of his authoritative power in order to subdue and curtail the plans of those who came to carry out their intention of arrest.

[21 : 46] Christ. Well, there, Christ reveals his authoritative power. They drew back and fell to the ground. They arrest Christ alone.

Secondly, there, Christ reminds Peter and us of his redemptive purpose in the world. Now, I am sure if you are in Christ today, that many are grateful that Peter, part of Peter's life is found recorded on the pages of the Bible.

And here, the very moment that Christ has commanded the release of the disciples, we read, Simon Peter having a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear.

The servant's name was Malchus. Now, this event is disclosed in all the gospel narratives. But strangely, the identity of the disciple who drew the sword is not disclosed by any of the other gospel writers apart from John.

And you might well ask the question, why is it that John reveals the identity of this disciple? And the only answer I can give is that when John wrote his gospel, he was an elderly man, Peter would have already been put to death.

[23 : 20] And the gospel writers for the main part do not tell us the name of the person who was injured either. Again, only John gives this information.

The other gospel writers tell us it was the servant of the high priest, but his identity is concealed. In all likelihood, Peter intended the death of Malchus, but either because of Malchus' quick reflexes or Peter's clumsiness with the sword, humanly speaking, it was the ear that he sliced off.

And you could say that this was a flashpoint at a very dangerous time, a potentially volatile situation.

And you know how it just needs a spark for something that is volatile to become further inflamed. You see it often.

You see it in demonstrations and there may be just an incident, it may appear relatively small and insignificant, and it's enough to inflame those who have gathered for the demonstration.

[24 : 46] And here this, humanly speaking, had huge consequences, had it developed. And Jesus steps in to diffuse what was a potentially inflammatory situation.

Some might consider that Peter was being courageous and fearless in the face of such overwhelming numbers.

I'm not persuaded of that line of thought. I rather think that this was the impetuous action of zeal without knowledge in the life of Peter.

There was much ignorance in his action, however well intentioned it might appear. For had Christ not taught repeatedly why he had come into the world, he had come on purpose to fulfill the types and promises of the Old Testament scriptures and by fulfilling them to provide salvation for sinners.

He came for the sole purpose of being the true lamb of God, the true Passover lamb. He came of his own free will to be the scapegoat upon whom the sins of the people would be placed.

[26 : 15] His heart was set on accomplishing this great work. It couldn't be done without the hiding of his power for a time. And to do it he became a willing sufferer.

And before we get into our self-righteous towers and begin to say that we wouldn't do what Peter did, let me ask you how many things have you already done in your ignorance and misplaced zeal that was not at all God glorifying.

you see the Bible teaches us it's not by might nor by power but by my spirit says the Lord of hosts.

We are not waging war according to the flesh for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but of divine power to destroy strongholds.

That's the power that you go out on. Not some kind of huge physique or military equipment and so on. And Christ emphasizes this especially in Matthew's account.

[27 : 32] Do you think that I cannot appeal to my father and who won't send me more than twelve legions of angels? Six thousand in a legion? That would be seventy two thousand.

But you see it's not by military power. It's not by that the church grows. It isn't by the sword or the gun. Bishop Ryle has a very acute observance here.

We should learn from these verses says Ryle that it is much easier to fight a little for Christ than to endure hardship and go to prison and death for his sake.

And he goes on to say there is much to learn from this episode. To suffer patiently for Christ is far more difficult than to work actively.

To sit still and endure calmly is far more hard than to stir about and take part in the battle. Crusaders will always be found more numerous than matters.

[28 : 42] The passive graces of religion are far more rare and precious than the active graces. Work for Christ may be done from spurious motives, from excitement, emulation, party spirit.

You know, if they did it, can we not do it? Or from the love of praise. Suffering for Christ will seldom be endured but from any but one motive.

That motive is the grace of God. And Reil goes on to say we shall do well to remember these things and forming our estimate of the comparative grace of professing Christians.

Some poor unknown believer who has been lying for years on his or her back enduring pain without a murmur may prove at last to have brought more glory to Christ through his or her patience and to have done more good through his prayers than the public action of others who may preach speak and write and who may earn the adulation of the church but may be not of God.

The grand test of grace is patient suffering. And I think while I hit the nail on the head there and he is teaching a very salutary lesson that perhaps we all need to take on board.

[30 : 23] And it reminds me of I may have told this before of a certain gentleman who belonged to this very community who spent I think I'm right in saying 40 years of his life in what was then the old county hospital.

If you were privileged to go and visit him it was like a Bethel to your soul. You know when people go to visit sick people you think you're doing the sick person a good turn.

Well when you went to visit Neil McLean as he was you weren't doing him the good. In fact at least that's how I viewed it.

he was doing you good. And every time you went into that little room that he had in the county hospital it was a precious experience and well worth going.

And as a young Christian I used to deride much spiritual benefit from going to see this man.

[31 : 41] who was hospitalized for the large part of his life. So you see you never know how much profit those who are in care for most of their lives because of illness of one kind or another and he suffered from a debilitating form of illness I'm not sure if it was today maybe there may have been a cure but in those days there weren't and he was there all these years in that little room well Peter here did far less good by his impetuous zealous action and drawing a sword he did much more good when he stood calmly before the Jewish council as a prisoner and said for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard well there is a reminder in this

I believe about our acceptance of the hard providences and the difficult providences of God in our lives and the role that that plays in our witness to and for Christ and so Christ reminds Peter of the coming of the purpose of his coming put your sword in its sheath he says shall I not drink the cup that the father has given me and he takes this opportunity as Jesus always does and in this exposed situation he teaches the lesson he's taking an Old Testament metaphor from many places but particularly from Isaiah 51 the cup which was symbolic of the wrath of God the cup which he is about to drink to his very last drugs the cup which the other gospels tell us he struggles with and says my father if it be possible let this cup pass from me who knows the depths the agonizing depths contained in this cup and the intensity of suffering associated with drinking it we could only say that the one who filled the cup and the one who drank from it that they alone know the contents of the cup and only the person who drank of it can speak from experience of the ingredients that were found in the cup anticipation of its contents caused him to be prostrated in the dust of the ground in the garden of

Gethsemane the Lord of glory in our nature the man of whom it is true all things were made through him and without him was not anything made than was made he alone drank the wine the undiluted wine of the wrath of divine of the divine just judge and the content of the cup revealed to his understanding in all its awful depths caused to sweat to fall as drops of blood. Such was the intensity of pressure in his wrestling with heaven. What was in the cup?

Well, I have already stated that the contents were a display of the judgment of the divine judge and the exercise of the penalty demanded by his holy law for sin. What did the holy law of God demand has the penalty for sin? It demanded death, eternal death. What was in the cup? Death was in the cup.

Because you see at the heart of the curse is death, separation from God and all that that entails. And in this reminder given to Peter, John wants us to see another angle. He wants us to see that Jesus took that cup and he resolved to take his servant ministry to the very end. That he would suffer the unmitigated wrath of God against sin. Not his sin, but our sin. He would go to the very end. He would drink it to the last dregs. A cup his father has given him.

[36 : 18] Matthew Hendry makes the observation that to every believer they are given a cup. Not an ocean without measure. It's a measured drink. But here is Christ drinking this cup so that the cup of blessing might be given to sinners like you and me. And that we might never know the bitterness that was in his cup. He doesn't flinch in taking this cup.

A reminder to Peter and us of his purpose in coming into the world. He must drink the cup there. There Christ reveals his authoritative power. There Christ restores the rapture deer of Malchus.

You know, the first miracle performed by the Lord, it's recorded for us by John, it was to turn water into wine. And the final miracle he performed prior to his crucifixion was the restoration or the healing of Malchus. The gospel writer Luke tells us, but Jesus touched Malchus and healed him. And I suppose if people were placing the miracles in order of importance to give marks for miracles out of ten, this miracle perhaps would be near the bottom of the list.

Humanly speaking, at any rate, because many other miracles seem to be of greater importance and more significance than this miracle. He raised people from the dead. He expelled unclean, demonic spirits. He fed thousands with very little. And you might almost say that this miracle, this last miracle is almost like an anticlimax. And yet it is spoken of in the four gospel narratives.

Every one of them mentions what took place here. Isn't that strange?

[38 : 49] The other, many of the gospel writers just say that it took place. But Luke, who was a doctor, he gives us more detail. He touched his ear and healed him.

We don't know if the ear was completely severed, or how badly wounded, or how deep the cut was, but that healing was instantaneous. He touched his ear and healed him.

There's no rush to A&E;, no ice use, no stitches, no antiseptic bandages. Of course, many of these things weren't there. He attaches the blood vessels on the nerve endings. I don't believe that you could see a scar where the ear was restored. I don't think you'd be able to tell by looking at Malchus.

Which ear had been cut off, it would have been perfect healing. Would he experience deafness or some other disability? I don't believe he would.

And you know, there is no, intriguingly, there is no report of any conversation taking place between Jesus and Malchus. But could Jesus not have said to him, You are the servant of the high priest.

[40 : 14] But I too am a high priest. He pays you a wage. But I can give you more. I can give you eternal salvation.

And so here is Malchus and he's standing, as it were, between two high priests. The one is merciless, Caiaphas.

But the other, the Lord Jesus Christ, is merciful and faithful. The true high priest, compassionate and able to bless.

And here, in restoring Malchus' ear, Christ does this miracle in the presence of his enemies. He demonstrates his power.

Did Malchus' life change course? Did he repent? Did he believe? Did he experience the pains of the new birth? Because the wind was blowing where it wishes around the garden of Gethsemane.

[41 : 22] was he at a later date amongst those who said, truly this was the Son of God? We don't know. Because we're not told. But ultimately, the question is not about Malchus, but about us.

It's about you and me. Not about Malchus. We too are like Malchus. We too have been touched by Christ.

The same call that was addressed to Malchus is addressed to us. And the question for you and me today is, are we willing to have this person as our high priest?

Because if we are, the Bible tells us we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin.

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Are you, my friend, willing to be a servant of this high priest?

[42 : 42] By nature, we are slaves to the prince of darkness. And the great high priest, the merciful high priest who came, you know, according to the order of Melchizedek, speaks of mercy and deliverance.

And my friend, if you have not sought his restoring power to repair and recreate a life broken, battered, bruised by sin's destructive power, will you not cry out to him now for mercy so that you come to experience the security of the intercessory work of the great high priest?

Melchizedek could testify, he healed my ear, but can you and I testify today that he healed my soul?

Has he healed your soul? If we trust in him, then we too shall know eternal restoration.

There, Christ reveals his authoritative regal power. There, Christ reminds Peter and us of his redemptive purpose in coming into the world.

[44 : 05] There, Christ restores the ear of Malchus. Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful if there, if here today, it was true of you that your life was also restored and healed by the same great high priest.

let us pray. Eternal God, we thank thee that thou art the great healer, that thou art the revealer of divine power, and that thou dost remind us of how that purpose was accomplished and effected in bringing redemption into the lives of sinners like us.

We bless thy name for the restorative power that is effected in the lives of many. Oh, forbid that we be strangers to it, and the glory shall be thine in Jesus.