

# WHEN GOD GETS ARRESTED

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*By the Book™* A Chapter by  
Chapter Bible Study Series  
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## Let's Begin

*From the very beginning of John's record, he's made sure his readers would understand one of the bedrock truths of the gospel: Jesus Christ was God born as man; He was the God-Man. Every miracle He performed, every word He uttered demonstrated this.*

*When we get to the eighteenth chapter, we begin a series of events that culminates in the crucifixion of Jesus for the sins of the world. Just imagine it for a moment: The Creator of the Universe; The Eternal God in the form of man, is about to be handcuffed and hauled off to the county jail with the common drunks. As we would say it today, God received His Miranda and was then placed under arrest!*

*This chapter remains one of the darkest pages in human history. If we didn't see the magnificence of Jesus in it all, it would be a depressing account. The outrageous indignities Jesus experienced before the cross are enough to break the most callous heart. We will examine some of them as we make our way through this chapter.*

*Note the outline we will use:*

- I. The Treachery Foreknown about Jesus' Arrest (vv. 1-12)**
- II. The Treatment Following Jesus' Arrest (vv. 13-24)**
- III. The Tragedy Forewarned before Jesus' Arrest (vv. 25-40)**

## I. The Treachery Foreknown about Jesus' Arrest (vv. 1-12)

Let's begin our study with a disappointing disciple who committed treachery against the Son of God--Judas. After praying the greatest prayer ever uttered, Jesus moved on with His disciples toward the outskirts of Jerusalem, stopping in an olive garden known as Gethsemane: "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples" (v. 1). It would be here in the garden that once again Jesus would turn to prayer.

We noted in our lesson last week that Jesus actually prayed for the cross to come. His passion to experience mutual glory with the Father in heaven moved Him

to desire the hour of the power of darkness (17:1-5). When Jesus arrives here, He once again turns to prayer, though John's concern lies elsewhere (cp. Matt. 26:36-46). Prayer never strayed far from the heart of Jesus. It would do us well if that could be said of us.

Judas Iscariot knew where Jesus would be: "And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples" (v. 2). The "brook Cedron" (v. 1) was a well-known land mark, being a winter stream which flowed between Jerusalem and Gethsemane (cp. 2 Sam. 15:23). The term means "dark waters."

Such could not be a more apt description of what Jesus would pass through here. We are incapable of understanding the darkness He experienced as the cross drew near. He was to be made sin by the sacrifice of Himself (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 9:26). At times the brook produced a red hue from animal blood draining into it from a channel leading up the hill to the temple where sacrifices were offered. Surely this was a powerful visual for Jesus that His blood would soon be required.

After leaving the upper room, Judas carried out his decision to betray Jesus: "Judas then, having received a band of men

### Reflection Connection

*Reflect upon a time when you feel that someone close betrayed you. Using careful discretion, share the moment with your group.*



### Reflection Connection

*The Scripture says “Satan entered into Judas.” What role did Judas have in whether Satan entered his life? Did he have a choice in the matter? Why or why not?*

and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons” (v. 3). This was not for Judas a spur-of-the-moment decision. To the contrary, Judas had already bargained with the Jewish leaders. Note what Luke records: “Then entered Satan into Judas... And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them” (22:3-4). The term “communed” carries with it the idea of haggling over the price. Judas bargained with the leaders over the betrayal of Christ the same as he bargained with the vendors over a sack of corn!

Judas’ circumstances should cause every person serious pause. You can be associated with the Lord and His people, but never have opened your heart to Him. An old country preacher said, “Youins can join all the churches you want to; and youins can be baptized so many times, you know every tadpole by name. But if you ain’t opened your heart to Jesus, you ain’t saved!” His English was not the best; but he surely spoke the truth of Scripture.

According to John, Judas secured a band of soldiers (v. 3). The word “band” could mean anywhere from 200 to 600 soldiers. That is a large group to arrest one Galilean carpenter.

They brought “lanterns” to light their way and “weapons” in case of a fight. “And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them” John sadly records (v. 5). This was a fellow disciple with whom John had walked, prayed, and perhaps even partnered with on occasion as they went out two by two doing ministry (cp. Luke 10:1). John now had to write in an eternal record, “Judas stood with them.” The panic the disciples experienced as they queried one by one, “Lord, is it I?” was now fully revealed. Judas committed treachery.

A well-needed lesson is here for all of us: *A man will always go where his heart is.* Judas could do no other than he did. Not because he was forced to do so. Indeed Judas wanted to do so! He wanted to betray Christ.

This is the last we see of Judas in John. He is never mentioned again. What if those were the last words written about you: “Judas stood with them”; that is, the enemies? What a heart-breaking, tragic story surrounds this man who knew the Son of God personally, walked with the Son of God closely, and served the Son of God as eye-witness to His miracles. Yet, in the end, Judas stood with the enemies of Jesus.

Not being able to cope with his charred conscience, Judas headed to the leaders with whom he cooked his poison stew to see if he could get some relief. It did not happen. Flinging the blood money on the floor, he ran to the nearest cliff, put a rope around his neck, and plunged to the fires of hell. Traitors to God and His Christ have no hope in this world or the next. The only hope we possess is Jesus’ death on Calvary.

## II. The Treatment Following Jesus’ Arrest (vv. 13-24)

As Jesus was taken from the Gethsemane Garden, He watched with sadness as His band of disciples burst apart and fearfully fled their wounded Master.

*A man will  
always go where  
his heart is.*



### Reflection Connection

*What role should the church play in society's politics? How much influence should the church have? Is it a good thing for Christians to be politicians? Why or why not?*

Soldiers took him to Annas, the father-in-law to Caiaphas, high priest that year. John sums it up: "And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people" (vv. 13-14). The office of the high priest had, at that time, degenerated into little more than a political fiasco. It is tragic when the space of God's house is barbed with petty politics.

Associated with the high priest as he was, Annas ruled behind the scenes, like a godfather would rule a mafia organization. Annas' public duties at that time were connected with the official temple business. Thus, this is not the first time he and Jesus had crossed paths. Since his duties included overseeing the money-changers in the temple courts, one only needs recall what Jesus did on Annas' turf (cp. 2:15). If you want to really get on the bad side of a wicked man, put your hand close to his wealth as did Jesus. Annas literally hated Jesus, not only for religious reasons, but for personal reasons.

Note that though Annas was very religious, he was not very moral. Religion apart from reality always becomes corrupt and immoral. In Jesus' words elsewhere, "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matt. 23:3). How easy to talk about faith, about church, and even about God. But saying and doing must be distinguished. One can say and not do, but one cannot do and not say. Why? Because actions themselves speak a sure message in an entirely different language.

As we read of this despicable treatment of Jesus, it is easy to note some blatant inconsistencies. For example, it was illegal at that stage in the arrest of Jesus to subject Him to interrogation. You were not to ask a prisoner a question that would force him to admit guilt: "The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine" (v.19). But Annas was not interested in justice. He only looked for a way to condemn Jesus.

In addition, Annas allowed Jesus to be mistreated (v. 22). It must have broken John's heart as he recorded that "one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand." This is the first physical assault of Jesus we have recorded. The Son of God who came to save all sinful men was punched in the mouth by a sinful bully. We can only hope he later repented of his sin and trusted the One Who stood before him and later died at his hands.

### Reflection Connection

*Is a religious court better than a secular court? Are there any circumstances that could insure justice for all? What do think of the concept of "a Christian nation? Do you think America is a Christian nation? Explain.*

## III. The Tragedy Forewarned before Jesus' Arrest (vv. 25-40)

As if the treachery of betrayal by one of Jesus' own disciples was not enough, such profound hurt was compounded by the terrible treatment Jesus experienced at the hands of the Jewish leaders. The very court that promised justice was the court that issued torture. This stands as a lesson to us all about the insufficient role of a religious regime. Just because a government is occupied by those who claim God's approval does not mean the government guarantees a just society.

Even so, another layer of pain and disappointment was added as the Lord went to the cross: "And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore



### Reflection Connection

*Think of circumstances in the modern world that would easily tempt people to openly deny Christ. Be specific.*

*What has kept you from denying Christ on certain occasions? Be prepared to share them with the group. Also, allow others to participate.*

### Reflection Connection

*Listed in the study are five factors which lead to denial.*

*Which one do you feel is the most prominent? Why? Ask others to choose one they feel qualifies. Be sure to encourage them to state their reasons why.*

unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not" (vv. 25, 27). Perhaps the closest disciple of all, Simon Peter, denied three times he even knew Jesus. If we hadn't read it, we would not have believed it.

With this in mind, let's observe *five factors* that lead to denial. *The first factor leading to denial is spiritual pride.* On three different occasions Peter had an opportunity to fulfill his bold pronouncement that he would never betray his Lord: "Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" (Matt. 26:33). Peter simply thought he was beyond this.

We all have moments when we are tempted to think ourselves stronger than we are. It happens to teenagers who are not mature enough to say no when a questionable act is encouraged by a peer--perhaps a popular person. Rather than stand and possibly be scorned, he falls because he wants to be liked or accepted. It happens to adults just as well. Perhaps a woman who is lonely succumbs to improper advances toward her because she does not dare risk losing a male friend. A business man could do similarly.

Spiritual pride adds gunpowder to dynamite in situations like these. The pride tricks us into thinking we are strong and will resist. Yet, the Apostle Paul warns us of this deception: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

*A second factor leading to denial is prayerlessness.* When Peter was in Gethsemane with Jesus, three different times he had opportunity to pray with Jesus and turned down that opportunity all three times. When one neglects his prayer time, he is leaving an open door for Satan to come in.

*A third factor leading to denial is walking in the flesh.* Peter attempted to take matters into his own hands. He figured he was strong enough to do it. Indeed the attitude Peter portrayed was nothing less than that from which he had been trained, being the rugged fisherman that he was. The flesh was willing but the spirit was weak (cp. Matt. 26:41; 2 Cor. 10:4)

*A fourth factor leading to denial is following too far behind Jesus* (v.15; cp Matt. 26:58). Peter ran away upon Jesus' arrest. Then, he began to follow after Jesus but kept a safe, secure distance. When we lag (too) far behind our Lord, there is no way our hearts will stay warm toward Him. In addition, if the reason we linger at a distance is to "protect ourselves" we are already in deep spiritual trouble. The reality is, the only way to remain under the covering of Jesus is to stay but an arm's length behind Him.

*Finally, the fifth factor leading to denial is wrong associations.* One will soon grow cold when the presence of Jesus is abandoned. The circle of friends we find ourselves in will in reality be a circle of vicious enemies. The young lady blew the whistle on Peter's cover-up. He was such a coward apart from Christ, he could not even remain strong against the criticism of a young maiden. Consequently, Peter denied the Lord and left in open shame.

Denial had its full fruition in Peter. Are you but a foot-step away from denying Jesus? Is it spiritual pride that has gripped you? Or are you following too far behind Jesus? Whatever the case, learn the wisdom of the Apostle Paul above: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).



So, from one mock trial to the next, Jesus stood before the leaders, accused of crimes they neither could prove nor legally judge. Yet, judge they did. Pilate, about whom we will learn more in the following chapter, cowardly allowed the health of his own political future to outweigh whether an innocent man should die. After numerous open pronouncements that he found no fault with Jesus, he still buckled to the crowds' threat to him: "But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas..." (vv. 39-40).

### Golden Greek Nugget

John records the "band" of men who came seeking to arrest Jesus was led by none other than Judas himself (vv. 3, 12). The term "band" literally means a "cohort." In the Roman army a cohort was equal to 1/10th of a legion of soldiers. A legion was 6,000 men, thus a cohort was 600 men. That was a sizable group to march quietly through the city and down to the garden to arrest Jesus. Since the arrest took place at night, and cohorts were usually not in full force at late hours, the band of men could have numbered 200. Even so, 200 men were more than enough to arrest Jesus!

### Wrap Up

*Jesus' pain before the cross would, in itself, drive all other men mad. He faced the betrayal of an officer in His band of disciples, the treasurer, Judas Iscariot. And though Christ knew from the beginning who it was who would betray Him, the pain nonetheless was excruciating. Added to that, when Jesus was arrested, all the disciples forsook Him as He was hauled before a kangaroo court and treated mercilessly by the very people from whom His human heritage came--the Jewish leaders.*

*Peter finally broke Jesus' heart when a young damsel put only a minor amount of pressure on Peter concerning his relationship with Jesus, when Peter cracked, swearing he never had even met Jesus. But even with all of the human pain Jesus suffered, nothing could compare to the spiritual torture Jesus suffered when He took our sins upon Himself, bearing the very wrath of God for you and me. Halleluiah! What a Savior!*

