



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

John 18:1-11 Commentary **New Revised Standard Version**

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

(John 18:1) After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.

After Jesus prayed His "High Priestly Prayer," He led His disciples to a garden in the Mount of Olives, separated from the temple by the Kidron valley. God planted the first important garden for Adam and Eve, where they betrayed God by eating of the forbidden fruit (see Genesis 3). In 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, Paul explained, "For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ." In 1 Corinthians 15:45, we learn that Jesus is the last Adam: "The first man, Adam, became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit." From a garden, Jesus began His walk to Calvary, where He would die on a cross and begin reversing the consequences of the sin of Adam and Adam's offspring (the whole human race). After three days, from a garden tomb, Jesus would rise from the dead. In John 19:41, we learn, "Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid."

(John 18:2) Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples.

Jesus often took His disciples to this garden on the Mount of Olives to pray and relax away from the crowds; therefore, Judas knew where to find Him. Just as Adam and Eve betrayed their Creator and suffered the consequences of sin and death, so Judas betrayed the One who came to save the world and suffered the consequences of sin and death. In the form of a serpent, the devil tempted and tricked Eve, who then tempted Adam to sin. In Revelation 12:9, John wrote, “The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.” The devil was also involved in Judas’ betrayal of Jesus, for Satan put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. In John 13:2, John explained, “The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him.” And in John 13:27, John wrote, “After Judas received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him.”

(John 18:3) So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Judas led Roman soldiers (political authorities) and temple police (religious authorities) to arrest Jesus. Previously, when the chief priests and Pharisees had sent their police to arrest Jesus, they had failed to do so. The police explained their failure in John 7:46, “Never has anyone spoken like this!” By sending the Roman soldiers, the chief priests and Pharisees were taking no chances that their temple police would fail them again. As an eyewitness, John explained they brought lanterns and torches, presumably to easily find Jesus (and perhaps His disciples) should they try to run away and escape. They also came with weapons. Most probably, in and around Jerusalem, they had seen Jesus’ disciples armed with swords, and Judas had most likely warned them that the disciples had swords. The soldiers and police wanted to be armed and ready in case the disciples decided to fight. In Luke 22:35-38, Jesus had told His disciples, “When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?’ They said, ‘No, not a thing.’ He said to them, ‘But now, the one who has a purse must take it,

and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, “And he was counted among the lawless”; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled.’ They said, ‘Lord, look, here are two swords.’ He replied, ‘It is enough.’” To fulfill Scripture and be counted among the lawless, Jesus’ disciples had to be armed. The soldiers and police arrested Jesus at night to make His arrest as easy as possible and away from the crowds. They arrested Jesus as one who was lawless. Jesus had not obeyed all the laws and traditions of the priests and Pharisees. However, Jesus did not break the laws of God or the laws of the Romans. Jesus even paid His taxes to the Roman Emperor. When asked about paying taxes, in Luke 20:25, Jesus said, “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” Then later before Pilate, the priests and Pharisees lied about Jesus; Luke wrote in Luke 23:2, “They began to accuse him, saying, ‘We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.’”

(John 18:4) Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, “Whom are you looking for?”

As we learned previously, Jesus knew and told His disciples what was going to happen to Him. In John 14:29, Jesus explained why He explained in advance what would happen, “And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.” When the soldiers and police first appeared, Jesus stepped forward, knowing who they were seeking. He wanted them to tell Him what and who they wanted without threatening them in any way, provoking a fight, or endangering His disciples. Jesus had no intention of resisting arrest because He knew what He had to do to fulfill the will of God and become the Savior of the world.

(John 18:5) They answered, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus replied, “I am he.” Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.

They asked specifically for “Jesus of Nazareth,” not Jesus the Teacher or Jesus the Healer. They identified Jesus only by His hometown, but remember what Nathanael first said of Jesus in John 1:46, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Judas could easily identify Jesus for them.

(John 18:6) When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they stepped back and fell to the ground.

The religious authorities tried to arrest Jesus at various times during His ministry. In John 5:18, we learn the priests and Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus because “he was calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.” Using the divine name “I Am” to refer to himself, in John 8:58, Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.” When they asked for Jesus of Nazareth Jesus told them that He was Jesus of Nazareth, but He again referred to himself using the divine name “I Am.” Then, they experienced so much of His glory they stepped back and fell to the ground. Some translations of John 18:6, add “he” in italics or in a footnote indicating “he” was added to the verse as “I am he.” But the addition of “he” distorts what Jesus said and takes away the power of what He said that partially led to their stepping back and falling to the ground. Perhaps to begin the eventual salvation of some in the crowd Jesus gave them a partial glimpse of His divine power and glory when He declared, “I am.”

(John 18:7) Again he asked them, “Whom are you looking for?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.”

After they fell to the ground, Jesus did not do what He could have done. With a word He could have called down an angel army upon them. In Matthew 26:53, Jesus told His disciples, “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?” Instead of sending His disciples to attack the armed soldiers and police or calling upon twelve legions of angels to overwhelm them, Jesus calmly asked them again, “Whom are you looking for?”

(John 18:8) Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go.”

When they told Jesus that they wanted Him, He declared that they had found “I am.” They would be arresting “I am.” Then He commanded them to let His disciples go free. He did not ask them to let them go. Jesus demanded they let them go. Jesus remained fully in control of His future.

(John 18:9) This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, “I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me.”

Jesus fulfilled His words to His disciples in John 16:30-33, “[His disciples confessed, ‘Now we know that you know all things, and do not need to have anyone question you; by this we believe that you came from God.’ Jesus answered them, ‘Do you now believe?’ The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!” After Jesus’ rose from the dead and appeared to them, they did remember these prophecies that He had made about His coming death. Furthermore, they knew that Jesus had prayed to the Father for them in John 17:11-12, “And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.”

(John 18:10) Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave’s name was Malchus.

We know the disciples were armed for Peter had a sword and used it. But in John 18:36, Jesus would later tell Pilate when on trial before him, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” Jesus restrained His disciples from fighting. From Luke the physician, we learn what impressed Luke about this incident in Luke 22:51, “But Jesus said, ‘No more of this!’ And he touched his ear and healed him.” As we will learn in John 18:15-16, John knew the high priest, so he also knew the high priest’s slave, Malchus, and John is the only gospel writer who identified the slave by name.

(John 18:11) Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?”

Jesus commanded Peter to put his sword back into its sheath. Notice, Jesus did not tell Peter to throw it away and never use a sword again [this omission might be worthy of discussion]. The Roman soldiers could report to Pilate that Jesus prevented His disciples from fighting them and Jesus allowed them to arrest Him peacefully. For these reasons, and perhaps others, after Jesus’ trial, Pilate could declare to the chief priests, Pharisees, and the crowd in John 19:4, “Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that *I find no case against him.*” Jesus referred to His suffering and death as the “cup” that His Father had given Him. All that Jesus would experience would be according to His Father’s and His will. In the Gospel of John, this is the only use of the word “cup,” We are reminded of the Lord’s Supper, for in Luke 22:20, Jesus said, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” Jesus shed His blood for the forgiveness of sins. Paul explained in Ephesians 1:7, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.”

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Who came to arrest Jesus? Why do you think so many came?
2. Why do you think they asked to see “Jesus of Nazareth”?
3. In John 17, what prayer or words of Jesus did the Father and He fulfill when He was arrested?
4. What are some character traits that we learn from Simon Peter’s actions?
5. What did Jesus say to Simon Peter about His actions? What do Jesus’ statements mean to you?

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Contact: P.O. Box 1052, Edmond, Oklahoma, 73083 and lgp@theiblf.com.