

The Traitorous Arrest
Mark 14:43-52 (11/29/15)
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Seven years ago, on December 11, 2008, FBI agents knocked on Bernie Madoff's apartment door to arrest him for investor fraud. As his case unfolded, he was charged with operating the largest Ponzi scheme in history. Several days earlier he wept in his spacious Manhattan office as he confessed to one of his key executives, DiPascali, with expletives deleted, "I'm at the end of my rope. I don't have any more money. Don't you get it? The whole thing is a fraud." Madoff was sentenced to 150 years in prison. His two sons who worked for him were never charged with a crime, but sadly two years after the arrest to the day, Mark Madoff hung himself with a dog leash from a pipe in his Manhattan apartment.

This morning we're looking at a different kind of arrest altogether, although it happened early in the morning and led to another infamous suicide. When they came to arrest Jesus, He didn't try to escape, He didn't fight back, He didn't call on angels or fire down from heaven, or perform an escape miracle. He didn't even kick and scream as they took him back to the city of Jerusalem for the greatest miscarriage of justice in world history. He went willingly.

Last week we saw Jesus in agony of soul alone in the dark garden as He faced the coming hour and the dreadful cup of God's wrath on sin. He cried out to God, "If possible, let this cup pass from me!" But then He submitted to the Father's will. He prayed, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done!" After praying those three times, peace and courage and strength flooded into His soul. It's like He put on the full armor of God, and now He's ready to face the coming ordeal on that cross, where He will pour out His soul in death, where He will drink that cup of God's wrath to the last drop, where He will be made a curse for sinners, where He will make propitiation for the sins of the people.

And so as we watch Jesus face this traitorous arrest, we see God's plan unfolding every step of the way. We'll be drawing on all four Gospel accounts to fill in the details of the arrest.

God's plan is unfolding...

First, through the wicked rulers – vs. 43b

"...who were from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders."

The hateful religious rulers gathered down in Jerusalem and sent the arresting crowd in the darkness of this early morning. For the last three years the religious rulers despised this Galilean field preacher. He threatened their power and sources of wealth and exposed their hypocrisy. They've tried to get rid of Him for the last three years, but now they are closing in on Him, with the help of their pawn Judas. They have sent out their goons to arrest Him and bring Him in so they can orchestrate His murder.

This world has always hated the truth of Christ. Jesus Himself warned the disciples that if the world hated Him, they'd hate us too. Sadly, there are groups of religious leaders today sitting in chairs of theology and leadership who have no more love for Christ and His Word than these guys do. We should not be surprised at the liberalism that rejects the Scriptures and all that they teach about creation, salvation, eternal hell, marriage, and the sanctity of life, and most other major doctrines of the Bible. These evil schemers in Jerusalem illustrate the heart of religious hatred of God and His Son.

But here's the encouraging thing – God is sovereign over all things and His plan from eternity past was unfolding in time through these apostate religious rulers waiting for their prey at Annas the High Priest's house (John 18:13). God told us in Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." These religious rulers are the builders, and they are clearly rejecting God's "stone," the Messiah. They are fulfilling the plan and words of God!

God's plan is unfolding...

Second, through the arresting crowd – vs. 43

Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs,

Immediately! That's Mark for you. In a moment, as Jesus says in verse 42, "Get up, let's be going." Jesus, our Soul-Warrior and Kingly Redeemer, walks out of the darkness to face the next step toward His hour of suffering and drinking His cup. Here are Judas and this large crowd to arrest Jesus. They are bearing swords and clubs and carrying torches and lanterns – tall ones so nothing escapes notice. The crowd contains two sorts. Many are Roman security officers, maybe several hundred. John 18:3 says there was a Roman cohort. A cohort was one tenth of a legion, which was made up of 6000 soldiers. So there were probably close to 600 soldiers in the arresting crowd. Plus, there were Jewish officers with them. So you have a huge crowd of Gentiles and Jews streaming behind Judas into this garden to arrest the Son of God! And these tough guys had their first century AK47s and RPGs at the ready – swords and clubs. They didn't want any escape this time, or any kind of violence they'd have to suppress.

Here's the amazing thing. These human figures are completely ignorant that they are part of the unfolding plan of God! And isn't that true of the masses of humanity today. They are blind, ignorant of spiritual truths, often joining the enemies of Christianity, going along with the crowd and with the culture, the blind led by the blind. Sadly, they think they are right. They think the experts have proven their false teachings true. They think Bible-believing Christians are the deluded ones, and so they just follow along. How many millions, even billions of people think evolution is a proven fact or Allah actually exists? How many in our day think people are intolerant if they believe same sex marriage is sinful! In a sense, they are just following their Judas! But they can't escape the hidden hand of God who uses the basest of men to accomplish His will! And here, God is using this huge arresting multitude to bring Jesus that much closer to the cross.

I don't know exactly how the details of John's account fit with the others, but you've got to love John 18:4-6. Let's listen in.

So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him (that's good right there!), went forth and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am He." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. So when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground (BAM!).

They tasted the power of God in that moment! That name, "I Am" is the name of Jehovah in the OT. No external force pushed them to the ground. It was Jesus' deity flashing out with His complete calmness and overwhelming majesty that caused them all to fall to the ground, including Judas!

God's plan is unfolding...

Third, through the betraying Judas – vss. 44-46

44 Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard." 45 After coming, Judas immediately went to Him, saying, "Rabbi!" and kissed Him. 46 They laid hands on Him and seized Him.

Out from the crowd steps Judas, the man about whom Jesus said, "It would have been better if he had never been born!" And yet, here he is, fulfilling the plan of God. As far as I know, until this moment when Judas steps out of the shadows at the head of the arresting crowd, the disciples had not realized he was the traitor. They must have gasped in unbelief when they saw Judas' face in the flickering of the torches and lanterns.

And what signal does he use? Undercover agents use all kinds of signals when staking out an arrest. For gangster John Dillinger, it was an FBI agent lighting a cigar as Dillinger exited the Biograph Theater. Judas has his own signal, "Whomever I kiss." And the moment Judas steps out of the darkness he immediately (there's Mark again) goes straight to Jesus and kisses Him.

Judas is not only betraying an innocent man, but a man with whom he had spent three years, intimately encountering His miracles and great compassion. Even now Jesus looked at Judas with eyes full of sadness, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48).

To see how despicable Judas' traitorous kiss was, Matthew 26:49 tells us Judas greets Him with, "Hail Rabbi! Rejoice! Peace! Cheers!" before he kissed Jesus. And the verb used for kiss here is "kataphilein" indicating a fervent, tender, repeated, affectionate kiss. It doesn't get any more despicable than this. Sproul describes it as "an act of hypocrisy with a vengeance." Another author said, "This is the grimmest and most awful thing in all the gospel story."

As Judas stretches his filthy lips out to Jesus' face, God's plan unfolds! Jesus tells Judas, "Friend, do what you have come for!" (Matthew 26:50). A little later Judas would come to his senses and it would hit him like a ton of bricks that he had betrayed an innocent man. Mark never mentions Judas again, but we know from Matthew and Acts that he couldn't bear the guilt of complicity in this murder and so went out and committed suicide. Apparently he hung himself, but the rope or branch broke and he plunged onto jagged stones that ripped his belly open and his insides came out! In his 14th century *Inferno*, Dante has Judas at the bottom of hell, placed head-first inside Satan's middle mouth with his back skinned by the devil's claws, eternally freezing in icy water.

As Jesus said, "It would have been better if that man had not been born." But that contemptible kiss unfolded God's plan one step further! No one, no matter how insidious the attack, will ever destroy the faith of Jesus Christ. Never forget, if God be for us, nothing can be against us.

God's plan is unfolding...

Fourth, through the fearful disciples – vss. 47, 50-52

47 But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear..... 50 And they all left Him and fled. 51 A young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him. 52 But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked.

Now Peter steps up and takes matters into his own hands. Actually, I've got a lot of respect for Peter here, even though he's completely misguided. He whips out his sword and somehow takes a lunge at Malchus, who well may have been the leader of the crowd since he was the high priest's servant. Maybe Peter tried to split Malchus skull in half or take off his head. Malchus probably ducked and all Peter got was his right ear. There stands Malchus, dumbfounded, blood dripping from his fingers, and 600 or so swords and clubs spring to the ready, like guns cocking for action. Now what?

What follows took everyone by surprise. Luke tells us Jesus says sternly to Peter, "Stop, no more of this," and heals the man's ear. Then Jesus looks at Peter and says, "Don't you know I could ask my Father and He would send twelve legions of angels?" That's 72,000 angels! "Peter, you should know who I am by now. You should know this arrest isn't out of my control! This whole thing is the unfolding of God's plan."

Jesus teaches us two things here. First, vengeance belongs to God. Romans 12 tells us to overcome evil with good, and right here Jesus illustrates it perfectly. Revenge makes great movies! I've been watching adult movies lately and learning a lot, like *Inside Out* and *Mater's Tall Tales*. In *The Penguins of Madagascar*, Dave the octopus despises the penguins because everyone loves penguins much more than octopi. So Dave plans revenge on the penguins, turning them into monsters. But once he gets his revenge, he complains, "I've got my revenge, but I feel so...empty! I know what I need...more revenge!" Well, Peter probably doesn't feel any better for his swordsmanship, especially after Jesus' rebuke. Jesus knows there's a time for revenge, but not now, and not through Peter!

The second thing Jesus teaches us is that Christianity is not based on the power of the sword. Biblical Christianity uses an infinitely greater power, the power of the gospel! Put up your sword, Peter. Jesus will assure Pilate later, "If My kingdom was of this world, then my servants would fight."

From the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and on to our own day, those early apostles and believers spread the gospel of Jesus Christ across the Roman world and beyond! Instead of slaying infidels, they brought the gospel message of forgiveness and acceptance by God! Our Savior embraced that hour and drank that

cup of wrath, and now, whoever calls on His name will be saved from their sin and come into a personal relationship with the Father!

Contrast that with 7th century Islam when Moslem armies put Christians to the sword and spread their Caliphate all over the Middle East, across northern Africa, and into Spain, all in the name of Allah. Their goal was to conquer all of Europe under the banner of Islam. But God instituted human government to protect people from terrorism, then and now. I love the story of the Battle of Tours in 732 when Charles “the Hammer” Martel turned the armies of Mohammed back and saved Europe from that growing Caliphate. This war is still raging 1300 years later, intensified under the banner of Isis and other Islamic terrorist campaigns. But don’t despair. God’s plan is still unfolding, right? And as it unfolds, we have the hope and power of the gospel. It is still the only power on earth than can conquer hearts and bring people forgiveness and eternal life.

Back to this very unsettling moment in that garden when Peter sheaths his sword and the disciples realize Jesus isn’t going to protect Himself or do a miracle and wipe the crowd before them off the face of the earth! Shocked, they all panicked and fled. That included that young fellow with the linen sheet you see in verses 51-52. He was probably Mark and either followed Jesus and the disciples earlier that night or he may have tailed the mob following Judas as they left the city looking for Jesus. Either way, he escaped by leaving the linen sheet behind and goes down in the history books as one of the original streakers.

God’s plan is unfolding...

Fifth, through the obedient Savior – vss. 48-49

48 And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as you would against a robber? 49 "Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me;

He’s telling them, “Your bosses back in the city aren’t in charge here.” True, they will lead him like a lamb to the slaughter, but what a powerful lamb He is! And He’s only a lamb because He prayed, “Not my will but Thine be done.” It looks like all is lost as they lead Jesus away, but God’s plan is unfolding. The day will come when every one of those poor deluded men will bow their knee to Christ. Perhaps Christ will save some of them by His Spirit when they hear the gospel later on. That’s our hope for all who attack Christianity. God is able to change the hardest hearts by the power of the gospel!

God’s plan is unfolding...

Last, through the infallible Scriptures – vs. 49

but this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures."

Let’s conclude with this. Jesus looks them squarely in the face with total calm and courage and kingly presence and assures them, “Everything happening right here is fulfilling God’s will revealed in Scripture.” Isaiah 53:7 said He would be led like a lamb to the slaughter, and that’s exactly what is happening as Jesus yields to their grasp and they lead Him to those Jewish rulers. Regardless of men’s attack on Scripture or God or the gospel or biblical morality today, God’s will is being fulfilled. God knows how to make the wrath of man to praise Him! And that’s exactly what we’re seeing here.

SO WHAT?

God’s plan unfolded every step of the way in the traitorous arrest of Jesus. Nothing happened then by chance or at the will and whim of man, and nothing is happening now in your life at the will and whim of man! You may be dealing with some really heavy affliction right now, but just as God’s plan was unfolding then for Jesus, know that God’s plan is unfolding now in your life for His glory and for your good! God kept His Word infallibly in that garden of Gethsemane, and He will keep His word for you and me! Submit your heart to Him, trust Him, and obey Him. Under the most severe trial, be sure your heart is saying, “Not my will but yours be done.”