

“It Must Happen This Way”
The Arrest of Christ and the Sovereign Plan of God
Matthew 26:47-56

Facts reflect the reality of a condition. They are true. They can be believed. But *interpretations* of facts are variable, inconsistent, at times inaccurate, and invariably not to be trusted.

One husband was complaining to his wife about their children, wondering if they would ever grow up. Saying, “Just a moment,” his wife pulled out a worn box that contained a frayed, yellowing diary — her diary from the year 1945. She read this entry from a particularly bad day: “May 7 — Terrible time in school, flunked the math quiz. Nancy bragged about her new bike. Why can’t I have one? I am bored, *bored*, BORED. Nothing important ever happens. Oh yes, P.S. Today is V-E Day. The war is over in Europe.”

The facts of her life and the situation in Europe were both true. Her perspective was horribly skewed and inaccurate. What she saw was accurate, but she wasn’t thinking about it in right ways.

On Good Friday, the disciples and the crowd around Jesus had many of the facts correct, but they both misinterpreted those facts and Jesus corrected them both in the same way with the same truth — with the perspective of God. One of the reasons we are sometimes prone to discouragement and despondency is that we are seeing the reality of circumstances correctly, but we are interpreting them wrongly. That happened for both the disciples and the crowds at Jesus’ arrest.

As we come to Good Friday and the communion table, let’s remember the facts of the night according to the perspective of God. **Notice this evening three perspectives concerning the arrest of Jesus...**

1. Jesus’ Arrest from the Perspective of the Disciples: “It Has All Gone Wrong” (vv. 47-53)

- Think about the things that had happened that evening:
 - ✓ Jesus had washed the feet of the disciples in the Upper Room and then partaken of the Passover meal, which would be transformed into the Lord’s Supper.
 - ✓ He had said something mysterious to Judas about “doing what you need to do” and then Judas left.
 - ✓ He taught the disciples at length in that Upper Room including mysterious talk about “going away.”
 - ✓ He had then taken them to the Mount of Olives to pray and secluded himself in prayer, and after having to wake up Peter, James, and John three times, He suddenly announced, ***Get up...*** (v. 46).
 - ✓ After an evening of stunning statements, the announcement of a ***betrayer*** (v. 46) had to be among the most stunning to the remaining 11. Things were not going the way the disciples imagined they would go.

- Then we come to v. 47 — **Judas, one of the twelve...large crowd...swords...chief priests...**
 - ✓ Not only is there a betrayer, there is a significant force that is aligned against Jesus and the 11.
 - ✓ The opposition against Jesus and the 11 is significant in number and force (weaponry).

- As we read the story, we are two millennia after the event, but even as he wrote it, Matthew was more than two decades past the event, but notice how he identifies Judas — **one of the Twelve**.
 - ✓ Though Judas had left earlier in the night and with this act of betrayal would never return (and would soon be dead from suicide), yet Matthew still identifies him as one of the Twelve (as do all the other gospel writers). That he thinks of Judas as “one of the Twelve,” is indicative that he is still shocked at Judas’ action — “*one of us did this!*”
 - ✓ While Jesus was a public figure, there were no pictures or videos to identify him and it was night, so it is not surprising that Judas needed to identify Jesus; that he did so with the word **Rabbi** (“Teacher”) and a kiss is a further shock to the disciples. The affectionate act is traitorous.
 - ✓ Jesus, akin to what he said in v. 46, seems resigned to Judas’ action — **Friend...** (v. 50)
 - Don’t think He is resigned to His fate (He is about to reveal an answer!).
 - Even though Judas is engaging in the most traitorous act leading to the worst sin in the history of humanity, Jesus addresses Him with grace. The word **friend** is not the typical word that expressed a kind of love for another, but it still was a word that meant “companion,” or “comrade.” He had offered to be Judas friend and even Savior; He still speaks with grace to him.

- In response to the arrest (v. 51), Peter acts quickly and cuts off the ear of the slave, Malchus (Jn. 18:10).
 - ✓ Instead of receiving an affirmation from Jesus and instead of leading the 12 to resist the crowd, Peter received a two-fold rebuke from Jesus.
 - ✓ In **verse 52**, Jesus reminds Peter that if he is going to **take up the sword** then he will have to accept the consequences of a sword-bearer (**die by the sword**) — perhaps by the government (Rom. 13:4).
 - ✓ In **verse 53**, Jesus reminds Peter that He has eternal resources to care for Himself and the 12 (**My Father**) — He does not need Peter to defend Him; Peter needs Christ to defend him.
 - He has access to God the Father; whatever He asks, the Father will give Him because they are unified in Being (co-eternal members of Trinity) and purpose (Jn. 17:20ff).
 - He has access to command the angelic realm — **Twelve legions** = 72,000 angels (and remember what *one* angel can do, Is. 37:36).

- Peter acted rashly, forgetting the purpose of Christ and the authority of Christ; his actions reveal the despair of the disciples were on this night:
 - ✓ Judas ended up taking his own life.
 - ✓ Peter was racked with grief and immense sorrow (v. 75).

- ✓ All the rest of the disciples except John fled from Christ at the trial.
- ✓ On resurrection morning they were secluded by themselves; “disconsolate” is wholly inadequate because in their minds, “it has all gone wrong.”
- ✓ To be a human being is to be a sufferer; many of you have suffered greatly. You know what it means to weep tears of bitterness. That is the 11 on that night, except far more. Everything is lost. Their worlds are shattered and they are utterly hopeless. They acted as hopeless as if Christ would not be raised (1 Cor. 15:16-19). That’s how they perceived and evaluated the events (n.b. v. 56b).

2. Jesus’ Arrest from the Perspective of the Crowds: “Jesus is Defeated” (vv. 47-53)

- When v. 47 tells us that a **crowd** arrived, it’s helpful to remember the nature of that crowd:
 - ✓ The crowd has the authority of the religious leaders (**chief priests and elders**) and of an armed police force (**swords and clubs**).
 - ✓ This was not a spontaneous crowd that gathered — the events of this night were like a carefully planned military attack — the religious leaders (Sanhedrin) had a detachment of “police” that they sent out fully armed to take Jesus.
 - ✓ They also had the support of **the people** that they had manipulated to turn against Jesus (27:19ff).
 - ✓ This was not the first time they had attempted to arrest Jesus (cf. Jn. 7:30, 32, 44), but this was the most carefully planned attack. This was their most significant effort to arrest Jesus.
- Further, in v. 50, they actually **seize** Jesus — took Him into custody, something they had been unable to do any other time they attempted to take Him or kill Him.
- As they approached Jesus and as the night unfolded, they had to be thinking, “Finally — we win.” There was nothing in this initial approach, including Jesus’ non-confrontational response that indicated that they would lose. He appeared (*from their perspective*) to give in to them.
- But neither the disciples nor the crowds rightly evaluated the events of the evening...

3. Jesus’ Arrest from His Perspective: It Has All Gone According to Plan (vv. 54-56)

- *Both* the disciples and crowd misinterpreted what happened on that evening, but Jesus corrected the 12 first (v. 54) — **How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled which say that it must happen this way?**
 - ✓ Jesus’ response is in response to Peter’s rash action against Malchus.
 - ✓ Jesus would not use governmental force or use civil acts of resistance to overcome His attackers.
 - ✓ Jesus would not use all the eternal and infinite resources at His disposal.

- *Why* did Jesus not use what He could have used to overcome His opposition?
 - ✓ Because He was submissive to the Word of God (which He had revealed) and God's plan revealed in Scripture. The Word that God had spoken had revealed that ***it must happen this way***.
 - ✓ When Jesus says, "it must happen," He means it is a logical necessity — there is no circumventing or exception to the plan of God which had decreed a Savior/Messiah that would suffer for sin.
 - ✓ Jesus Himself had revealed this reality on numerous occasions (e.g., 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19).
 - ✓ And the Old Testament taught specifically about the necessity of His death:
 - Psalm 22 prophesied the Father forsaking the Son (v. 1).
 - Psalm 41 prophesied that a friend would betray the Messiah (v. 9; cf. 55:12-14).
 - Isaiah 53 prophesied the suffering and death of the Messianic servant (vv. 3-5).
 - The Law demanded His death (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12-21). A right accounting of sin requires death — and only a perfect sacrifice is adequate (2 Cor. 5:21).

... If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, you are attempting to self-atone for sin, to forgive yourself. And you cannot do it (certainly not in a way that will be acceptable to God).

... But Christ did what you cannot do by dying on the cross. He did not die for His own sin (He did not sin and was the only perfect Man, who perfectly kept and fulfilled God's commands). He died for the sins of others — for the sins of any who would believe in Him. And that is what was necessary about His death; if anyone would ever survive the punishment of God's righteous wrath against sin, he would need someone outside of himself to provide for his forgiveness. If you could work for all of eternity, you are incapable of paying off the debt of your infinite sin. The only way out of God's judgement is to trust in Christ as your forgiver and liberator from sin. You must believe Him, and I urge you to believe Him tonight.
- In verses 55-56, Jesus answered the crowd in a very similar way: ***have you come out...?***
 - ✓ He is pointing to their inadequacy to do anything without His cooperation. *They* were not controlling events that night, He was (as He did every time they attempted to arrest Him; cf. Jn. 7).
 - ✓ Then He reminded them with the same truth that He had just told the disciples: ***all this has taken place to fulfill the Scripture of the prophets....*** This was God's sovereign, divinely revealed plan. No man did this; God did this to provide salvation and freedom for sinners.
 - ✓ It was a divine necessity for Christ to die. God decreed it. God willed it. God made it necessary. Someone has said, "Jesus must drink the cup which the Father gave him..." [Hendriksen]
 - ✓ Christ left heaven, put on the clothing of manhood, went to the Temple as a 12-year-old, called the disciples as a 30-year-old, preached the Sermon on the Mount, healed some sick people, raised Lazarus from the dead, and entered Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday, knowing the entire time that it was a *necessity* for Him to be rejected and to die.

- So on this night, Jesus was betrayed, rejected, and taken to trial and then the cross and death. And all of it was necessary. Why was it necessary?
- If there was no rejection, there was no suffering and if there was no suffering, there was no death and if there was no death, there was no resurrection and if there was no resurrection, there was no victory over sin and Satan and if there was no victory over sin and Satan, there was and is no hope for us.

CONCLUSION: While all this was necessary, don't imagine that Jesus begrudged it. While it was the Father's plan, He was in union with the Father and did this with joy (**Heb. 12:3**). He did it with joy because of His love for the Father and His love for the people He was redeeming.

- When we read the accounts of the rejection of Christ, there should be at least two responses:
 - 1) We should be horrified that those who heard the clear declaration of Christ about the glory of God and what Christ had seen in Heaven rejected Him outright. What a tragedy!
 - 2) But a second response also is this: what grace, that God decreed and used the disobedience of men to provide the very means by which some would come to salvation. "While we were still enemies, Christ died for us." He had to die for us; and to die for us He had to be rejected. That was both His joy and for our joy.
- As we come to this table of communion, remembering Christ's death some 2000 years ago, remember the necessity of His death (He had to die to atone for sin). And remember His joy in undergoing that death so that you might be saved.