

Jesus has just prepared Himself for the hours ahead, submitting Himself to the will of His Father in prayer, and is now ready to bear our sins on the cross. In this passage we will see Judas' betrayal, the arrest of Jesus, the mockery of a trial that condemned the sinless Son of God, and the denial of Jesus by one of His most trusted disciples. Thank you, Jesus for all that you suffered for us!

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47 And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

**“And while he yet spake”** – In the previous verse Jesus is waking the disciples and warning them that the one that would betray Him was coming (**Matt. 26:46** “*Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me*”). Judas is approaching as these words are coming out of Jesus' mouth.

**“lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came”** – All four gospels refer to Judas as “one of the twelve” to remind us of the severity and the evilness of the betrayal. It would be one thing for an outsider to have Jesus arrested, but Judas was one of the trusted disciples. He had been chosen personally by Christ and was privileged to be exposed to the teaching of Christ firsthand; apparently he had even been given the gift of healing and casting out demons. Yet he turned his back on all that for the sake of 30 pieces of silver.

**“and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people”** – Judas had cut a deal with the chief priests to betray Jesus (vs. 14-16) and they had supplied him with armed men to insure that Jesus could not escape. They apparently sent enough men to be able to overpower Jesus and the eleven disciples if necessary, arming them with swords and staves (wooden clubs). They were obviously prepared for a fight but Jesus will point out the irony that they have come out with such an armed force just to arrest Him (v. 55).

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48 Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. 49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

Judas had a prearranged method of identifying Jesus to the multitude that had followed him to Gethsemane so that they would not accidentally capture the wrong man and allow Jesus to escape. Whichever man that he greeted with a kiss would be the man that they should arrest. “Forthwith” means “immediately,” so Judas did not waste time when he approached the group of disciples and Jesus. He went straight to Jesus, greeted Him and gave Him a kiss. The Greek word for “kiss” in v. 48 is slightly different from the one used for “kissed” in v. 49. In v. 48, the word for “kiss” is *philēsō* and refers to a kiss of friendly affection. The word used for “kissed” in v. 49 is a compound verb based on the first word: *katēphilēsen*. The compound nature of the verb adds intensity, giving it the additional meaning to kiss repeatedly or more affectionately. It appears that Judas wanted it to be unmistakable which man the multitude was to arrest so he didn't just give Jesus a quick peck on the cheek and step away. He apparently gave Jesus a prolonged and/or exaggerated kiss on the cheek.

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50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

The Greek word for “friend” is not the usual affectionate word for friend but one that means “comrade.” Jesus is asking Judas what brings him here at this time. Of course, Jesus knew why he was there but it seems he wanted Judas to think about what he was doing. In Luke's account Jesus points out the irony of Judas' gesture: “*But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?*” (Luke 22:48). Once the multitude knew which man was Jesus, they come and arrest Him.

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51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out *his* hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

John identifies Peter as the one with the sword and the servant as Malchus (John 18:10). Peter, impetuous as ever, wants to protect Jesus and perhaps validate his earlier claim of being willing to die for Jesus. He attacks one of the men arresting Jesus and cuts his ear off before Jesus commands him to stop (v. 53; John 18:11).

**Verses 52-56:** Jesus, in order to prevent the disciples from being harmed (v. 52; John 18:9), tells Peter to stand down and put his sword away. If He needed defending, Jesus said, then He could ask His Father for twelve legions of angels. Instead, these things (His arrest and subsequent suffering) must happen in order to fulfill scripture. He then asks the multitude why they came with swords and staves since they could have taken Him at any time while He taught in the temple. When the disciples saw that Jesus was not going to resist being arrested they all abandoned Him and ran away as He had predicted (v. 31).

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57 And they that had laid hold on Jesus led *him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

The multitude take Jesus to the house of Caiaphas the high priest, who was waiting with the scribes and elders ready to try Jesus. That fact that they were already waiting for Jesus indicates that they had planned this out and were not willing to wait until morning to find something with which to condemn Jesus. They wanted to accelerate the process so that they could kill Jesus as soon as possible before anyone could come forward to defend Him. This trial was illegal because: 1) trials were not to be held at night; 2) capital cases could only be held at the temple in public. This trial was being held after midnight and behind closed doors.

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58 But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

Peter, concerned for Jesus' welfare, wanted to see what would happen to Him but his fear prevented him from getting too close in case he was recognized and arrested as well. So he casually slipped into the courtyard of the high priest's estate and sat with the servants on the outskirts of the action.

59 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; 60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, 61 And said, This *fellow* said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

Not interested in truth or justice because they wanted Him dead, the chief priests, elders and the council began to search for people that would provide false testimony of Jesus committing a crime worthy of death. However, their problem was that the law required that the testimony of at least two witnesses had to agree in order for the testimony to be accepted. Even though many false witnesses came, no two agreed (“yet found they none”) and so they did not have an accusation that would hold up when they publicly declared their verdict against Jesus. Finally, they found two witnesses who both testified that Jesus claimed that He could destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. This statement was a distortion of what Jesus actually said for He was speaking of the temple of His body (John 2:19-21).

62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what *is it which* these witness against thee?

After so many failed attempts to accuse Jesus, they hypocritically question why He does not respond to the one feeble accusation that they were able to fabricate. Jesus does not answer because: 1) they would not listen to any defense He could make since they have already made up their mind that He was guilty; 2) He is heading to the cross and He is not going to do anything that would prevent that from happening. Jesus is not a victim here because it is God’s will that Jesus be crucified, as Jesus later tells Pilate (John 19:11).

**Verses 63, 64:** Frustrated by Jesus’ silence, the high priest puts Jesus under an oath before God to answer the question of whether or not He was the Messiah. Jesus admits that He is and that they will one day see Him sitting on the right hand of God and returning in glory.

65 Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. 66 What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.

Since they did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, they see His answer as blasphemy. The high priest seizes on this opportunity and declares that they no longer need witnesses against Jesus since now they have evidence from His own lips. He asks the assembled council for their verdict and they reply with the one they had already decided before the trial started: Jesus is guilty and worthy of death. Adding to the hypocrisy of the trial, it was forbidden for the high priest to rend his clothes according to Lev. 21:10.

**Verses 67, 68:** Their hatred for Jesus becomes more evident as they blindfold Him (Mark 14:65; Luke 22:64) and then begin to spit on Him, beat Him with their fists, and slap Him. They cruelly taunt and ridicule Him, daring Him to demonstrate His power as the Christ by identifying each person who is hitting Him while He is blindfolded.

69 Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. 70 But he denied before *them* all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

Meanwhile Peter is still sitting outside in the courtyard of the high priest’s house, waiting and watching to see what would happen to Jesus but not getting too close. Suddenly a young slave girl remembers that she has seen Peter traveling with Jesus and mentions this in front of Peter and the servants that were there. Peter becomes afraid and denies Jesus for the first time, claiming he doesn’t know what the girl is talking about.

71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth. 72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

Peter steps away from the people who heard what the first lady had said withdraws to the “porch” (the gateway for entering the courtyard from the street). Standing there, another slave girl saw him and declares before the people standing around that she has seen him with Jesus of Nazareth. Peter denies Jesus for the second time, this time with an oath (the first century equivalent of “I swear to God that I do not know the man!”). Notice that each time Peter’s denials become more forceful as his fear escalates.

73 And after a while came unto *him* they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art *one* of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. 74 Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.

**“And after a while came unto *him* they that stood by”** – Apparently the people who had heard each of the two slave girls had been discussing whether or not Peter had been with Jesus. Someone must have brought up the fact that Peter had a Galilean accent.

**“and said to Peter, Surely thou also art *one* of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee”** – Peter talked like a Galilean and since Jesus was from Galilee they naturally associated Peter with this Jesus of Galilee. Apparently not many Galileans came to Jerusalem.

**“Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man”** – Peter’s cursing may not have been foul language but was a pronouncing of a curse, either on himself if he was lying or on the next man that suggested that he knew Jesus. The swearing was a repeat or an extension of the oath he said to the second slave girl. Peter may have lost his temper for this third denial.

**“And immediately the cock crew”** – Likely while the words were coming out of Peter’s mouth, he hears the cock crow and probably immediately stops talking.

75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

Peter had apparently forgotten Jesus’ prediction that he would deny Jesus up until that very moment, and hearing the cock crow likely hit him like a ton of bricks. The guilt for denying that he knew Jesus was no doubt crushing, for Peter leaves the premises to find a place to weep over what he has done. Have we denied that we know Jesus through our speech or behavior in front of the world?