

Gospel Reflections:
JOHN 18

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JOHN 18:1-14 - THE BETRAYAL AND ARREST OF JESUS

- 1: 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.
- 2: And Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place: for JESUS oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples.
- 3: Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.
- 4: JESUS therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?
- 5: They answered Him, JESUS of Nazareth. JESUS saith unto them, I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them.
- 6: As soon then as He had said unto them, I AM He, they went backward, and fell to the ground.
- 7: Then asked He them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, JESUS of Nazareth.
- 8: JESUS answered, I have told you that I AM He: if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way:
- 9: That the saying might be fulfilled, which He spake, Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none.
- 10: Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.
- 11: Then said JESUS unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?
- 12: Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took JESUS, and bound Him,
- 13: And led Him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.
- 14: Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that One Man should die for the people.

What frightful events here are reported! CHRIST leads His disciples to The Garden at Gethsemane, where He had led them many times before, to pray and worship. The place then was well known to Judas the betrayer. And there was again the temptation offered to JESUS to turn away from the cup of His Passion for which The Father had sent Him into the world to receive. But think, if JESUS had not been in complete submission to the will of The Father in Heaven, the devil might still have hoped to frustrate The Almighty's clock of salvation that was then ticking so loudly!

So CHRIST responds to the temptation, "Shall I not drink of this cup of suffering which My Father Above has sent me to drink?" But though His free will was fully intact, and He was no robot of The Father, still – because He, The Holy One of Israel, was without sin – therefore He was in perfect submission to The Father's will. For as JESUS had said many times before these events, as in JOHN 10:30, "I and My Father are One." As Israel confesses in The SHEMA of DEUTERONOMY 6:4 –

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

SHEMA” YISRA’EL ‘ADONAY ‘ELOHEYNU ‘ADONAY ECHAD! “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our GOD is one LORD!” There is only One GOD, and in His unity – there being only one Son of GOD – they can only be but One.

But still this “messianic secret” of Who JESUS CHRIST is in His Person – The sinless GOD-Man of Saint Anselm – still it seems everyone around Him, and including His Apostles at this moment, do not understand. The Messiah JESUS stands there before them – or should we say that they all stand there before The Messiah JESUS – and they inquire, “We seek JESUS of Nazareth.” The Lord replies, “I AM He!” And they fall to the ground on their faces, as we all shall do on our Day of Judgement before The Mercy Seat of CHRIST in The Heavenly Tabernacle.

This, we would think, should have clued Judas, the accompanying Temple guards and the members of the darkened leaders of the Sanhedran there present – that they were in The Presence of The Eternal One in some manner. But no, they remain blind. They get back up to their feet, and again they inquire, “We seek JESUS of Nazareth.” And again our Lord replies, “I AM He,” or shall we say, “I AM THAT I AM, having taken upon Me human flesh!” And now we stand at the dawn of the falling away of the “messianic secret” presented so softly in The 3 Synoptic Gospels, but recorded so loudly in The Gospel of JOHN. “O Father Above,” we may hear the soul of JESUS confess, “I shall submit to Thy will, and I shall loose none of the saints whom Thou hast given Me to keep, both now and forever!”

And here also, we see CHRIST reprimanding Saint Peter, His most emotionally reactive Apostle, to put away His sword. Saint Matthew records of this event in MATTHEW 26:52-54 the warning of our Lord, that “...all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall The Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”

Let us note 2 things here. First, that The Kingdom of GOD expands to save the lives and souls of men, not by bloody warfare, but by spiritual warfare in The Victory bought by The Blood of JESUS CHRIST, The Lamb of GOD given up to redeem us from sin and death. Second, that, for the saints of GOD to possess That Victory of salvation in the forgiveness of their sins at The Cross, it was necessary and foreordained that The Messiah must suffer and die in His humiliation before He could possess His – and thus our – exaltation.

Again re return to ISAIAH 53:10-12, “Yet it pleased The LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of The LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My Righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

JOHN 18:15-27 - THE DENIAL OF PETER

15: And Simon Peter followed JESUS, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with JESUS into the palace of the high priest.

16: But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

17: Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of This Man's disciples? He saith, I am not.

18: And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

19: The high priest then asked JESUS of His disciples, and of his doctrine.

20: JESUS answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in The Temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.

21: Why askest thou Me? ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

22: And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck JESUS with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?

23: JESUS answered Him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou Me?

24: Now Annas had sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.

25: And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of His disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not.

26: One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?

27: Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

One of the great testimonies of The Truth of The Gospels is that the Apostles are painted in all their fallible humanity for us to see. There is no doctoring here of The Church over 2,000 years to sanitize and make perfect our Lord's disciples. If there was a conspiracy to contrive what was not true about JESUS, surely The Church would have also sanitized The New Testament Books to present us with living perfect saints who never failed or fell into doubt or sin. But they do not. We see The Truth of which Saint Paul writes in Saint Peter's palpable fear and thrice denial of CHRIST here, recalling ROMANS 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of The Glory of GOD."

But the very reason that The Messiah JESUS came to earth as The GOD-Man, to give up Himself at The Cross in our places for our sins, is that we are not capable of saving ourselves. Only by GOD's Grace are we justified and set free from the consequences of our own sins, which would otherwise be continued enmity with GOD and eternal separation of our souls from Him. But as Saint Paul next writes in ROMANS 3:24-26, "Being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS: Whom GOD hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His Blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of GOD; To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that he might be just, and The Justifier of him which believeth in JESUS!

JOHN 18:28-37 - JESUS BEFORE PILATE

28: Then led they JESUS from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat The Passover.

29: Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against This Man?

30: They answered and said unto him, If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee.

31: Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your Law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:

32: That the saying of JESUS might be fulfilled, which He spake, signifying what death He should die.

33: Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called JESUS, and said unto Him, Art thou The King of the Jews?

34: JESUS answered him, Sayest thou This Thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?

35: Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me: what hast Thou done?

36: JESUS answered, My Kingdom is not of this world: if My Kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My Kingdom not from hence.

37: Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art thou a King then? JESUS answered, Thou sayest that I AM a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto The Truth. Every one that is of The Truth heareth My voice.

I have noticed that Catholic Christian Crosses – “Crucifixes” – are typically titled at the top with a depiction of the sign that Pilate was to later have affixed over CHRIST’s head at The Cross with the letters “INRI.” This is Saint Jerome’s Latin Vulgate of JOHN 19:19, which we shall encounter shortly – “Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum” - “JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.” But let us note that JESUS responds to Pilate’s inquiry about His Kingdom, “My Kingdom is not of this world. If it was, my saints would take up arms to prevent Me from falling into your hands.” Here again we hear the echoes of what The Lord told Saint Peter in The Garden, “Put away your sword, for he who lives by the sword shall die by the sword.”

JESUS CHRIST comes into human history in His Person to extend His Kingdom of rescuing lives and saving souls into GOD’s Grace from Israel into The Church. The saints of GOD are brought into CHRIST’s Body however, not by birth or tribal heritage – was with Old Testament Israel – but by faith and their resulting good works in His Mercy. This is a vital lesson for The Church to hear today, when we feel so often beleaguered by evil rulers, oppressors and godless social currents – flowing it seems today like a river straight out of the mouth of hell – washing away so many men’s lives into despair and destruction.

But CHRIST's Body does not win men and women into Her pastures by physical warfare. Our battle is not against flesh and blood, so much as it is against demoniac dark powers, evil and sin. Men must know that GOD is, that He loves them, that He is sovereign, that He decrees what the measure of good versus evil is, that we are all to be called before His Judgement Seat to answer for our lives, that those whose souls are not covered by The Righteousness of JESUS CHRIST shall be cast away forever into everlasting darkness and away from His Loving Presence. O what a fearful thing is an unrepentant sinner in the hands of The angry and righteous Creator GOD!

But men need not despair for lack of hope of forgiveness of their sins by The Almighty. We need only repair to The Cross of The Son of GOD. When Saint Peter and the other Apostles declared JESUS CHRIST, and Him crucified for their sins, the men of Israel were cut to the heart, saying in ACTS 2:36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that GOD hath made That Same JESUS, Whom ye have crucified, both Lord and CHRIST!" Fear of fear, "We crucified The Messiah? Men and brethren, what shall we do? Is there no hope for our forgiveness?" The reply is however the same hope of salvation in JESUS that is placed before all men, of which we should read with joyful hope in ACTS 2:38, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in The Name of JESUS CHRIST for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of The HOLY GHOST!"

JOHN 18:38-40 – PILATE STRUGGLES IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD'S TRUTH

38: Pilate saith unto Him, What is Truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in Him no fault at all.

39: 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?

40: Then cried they all again, saying, Not This Man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

How like all of us, at one time or another in our lives, when we are sinking up to our necks in sin, to cry out, "O no LORD, I shall never repent! I shall sin even more, that I may deserve even more Divine judgement and wrath!" Pilate, a then unclean heathen Gentile, could see that JESUS was clearly innocent. He saw the malice and envy in the chief priests and rulers of the Jews. He was uncomfortable standing in The Presence of Divine Truth, but he at least knew enough to be uncomfortable, and so sought for a way to release CHRIST.

But just as it is often the case even with us today within The Church – when we are sinning, know it, and pretend that we are not – much of GOD's people in these events in The Gospel refuse to open their eyes and see. "GOD's Truth? What need have we of such a thing? We have Abraham for our father and Moses for our mentor! Surely, GOD knows how righteous and holy we are! This JESUS of Nazareth makes us uncomfortable in our sin, for by His Truth, He forces us to behold our own sins! But let us not repent of our sins. Rather, take away The Light of GOD from before our eyes, that we may

continue in our darkness, retain our sins and be comfortable in our damnation – even unto death!”

The prophet Micah records for us what The Almighty calls us to in MICAH 6:6-8, a call which sadly GOD’s people often at times seem to choose to be deaf and blind to, even at the peril of their very lives and souls, “Wherewith shall I come before The LORD, and bow myself before The High GOD? shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will The LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth The LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD!”