

## **Exegetical Notes, Matthew 26:47-56**

### **“Arrested”**

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### **Matthew 26:47-56**

#### **Verse 47**

*While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.*

- These events happened at the very moment when Jesus' time of preparatory prayer ended. There was no lapse of time.
- Judas, the one who would betray Christ, came to the Garden of Gethsemane looking for Jesus. Perhaps he knew that Jesus was going there after supper.
- Judas brought with him an official group that was charged with Jesus' arrest. John tells that there were some Roman soldiers among the group. However, the group appears to be an ad hoc group put together by the temple authorities and authorized by them for the purpose of arresting Jesus. They were armed with whatever weapons they could find from swords to clubs.

#### **Verse 48**

*Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.”*

- Judas had given specific instructions to the group as to how they would know which one was Jesus. He would greet Jesus with a kiss. The kiss would be the indication of which man was Jesus. On this basis the others would know whom to arrest.

#### **Verse 49**

*Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.*

- Judas' greeting is very respectable. There is nothing amiss. He calls Jesus “rabbi,” the respectable and acceptable greeting. The kiss was the way a

devoted student would normally greet his teacher. On the surface, everything appears to be proper and in its place.

### **Verse 50**

***Jesus replied, “Friend, do what you came for.” Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him***

- Jesus returned Judas’ greeting addressing him as “friend” and telling him to do what he had come to do.
- The kiss already having been given, the men sent from the high priests and elders did what they had been authorized to do. They arrested Jesus.

### **Verse 51**

***With that, one of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.***

- John 18 tells us that the companion of Jesus who did this was Peter, and that the servant of the high priest was named Malchus. It also tells us that Jesus healed Malchus by replacing the ear.
- This episode shows us Peter’s intention to even die for Jesus if necessary. Peter is resolved to defend Jesus no matter what it costs. His later denial of Jesus was contrary to his declared intention. This separates Peter and Judas. Judas’ declared intent was to deny Jesus. He acted in accord with his intentions. Peter did not.

### **Verse 52-54**

***“Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”***

- Jesus told Peter to put his sword away. He told Peter that Peter’s defense of him in this way was unnecessary.
- Jesus explained that if he asked for it, God would send more than twelve legions of angels to defend him. First, a legion consisted of 6,000 soldiers. Thus, Jesus could have called for 72,000 angels to defend him had he been so inclined. Second, this number would have been far greater than that sent to arrest him and his defenders would have been divine beings not mere mortals. Third, the number is symbolic. Twelve is the number which means whole or complete. Thus, Jesus was saying that he had at his command all of the heavenly

- hosts should he choose to summon them. The point is that he did not then, nor does he now, require human help for his defense.
- Jesus makes his reason for not summoning the hosts of heaven clear as well. He did not call them because things were unfolding according to the Scripture; that is according to the plan of God.

### **Verse 55**

***At that time Jesus said to the crowd, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.”***

- Jesus then turns his attention away from Peter and back to the crowd. He asks them why they are behaving in such a way towards him since he has made himself available to them in the temple through the days previous to this night.
- Again, he says that things are happening as they are to fulfill the Scripture.

### **Verse 56**

***Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.***

- See Zechariah 13:7. This also fulfills the prediction that Jesus had made at supper that night. Peter alone remained, but at a distance.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Arrested*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)