

30. John 18:1-14

Getting started

Get a map of ancient Jerusalem and look at where the events of the last day in Jesus' life took place. Look for the location of the house with the upper room, the Temple, Kidron Valley, the Mount of Olives, and the suggestions for where Calvary/Golgotha/The Place of the Skull was, e.g. <http://www.israelhebrew.com/map-of-ancient-jerusalem/>

Observations

1. Where was Jesus arrested?
2. Who authorised the arrest?
3. How well known was Jesus? *[It was night, but it does not seem that the arresting party knew what Jesus looked like.]*

Note:

A question that is often asked is how historically accurate is each gospel. There is no doubt that each writer arranges the material for his particular purpose. Some have questioned the historicity of John's gospel. However, John records Jesus in Jerusalem on a number of occasions in the three years of his public ministry (e.g. 2:12-3:21; 5; 7; 8; 9; 12:12-20). The other gospels have a trajectory towards Jerusalem. It is likely that, as an observant Jew, Jesus would have gone to Jerusalem for the major festivals each year, as John records. This would include Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles (chapter 7). We can have confidence in the historicity of this gospel (and the others!).

Interpretation

1. Why would the arresting power be the chief priests and Pharisees (aided by Roman soldiers) rather than Roman officials? *[Probably because Pilate and his officials did not see Jesus and his followers as a threat. It was the Jewish authorities who wanted to get rid of Jesus.]*
2. Why might the arresting party draw back and fall to the ground?
3. What purpose is served by verses 8-9? *[There are many ways that Jesus' last days on earth fulfil and connect with passages in the Old Testament. This is another connection, and it shows that God is still in control, fulfilling his plans to rescue his people.]*
4. Why did Peter carry a sword? *[He did not realise what type of Messiah Jesus was.]*

5. Why mention the name of the servant who lost his ear? *[So early readers could check the accuracy of John's report.]*
6. How do Jesus' words to Peter in verse 11 fit with the accounts in the three other gospels of Jesus' passionate prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane? There Jesus had asked his Father to take the cup of wrath from him. *[Here Jesus is reminding Peter that Jesus had already decided to take the cup of his Father's wrath.]*
7. What are the possible interpretations of verse 14? *[Caiaphas almost certainly did not mean that someone needed to die for the sins of the world. He probably meant that killing Jesus would quieten the opposition to the Chief Priests, and let them get on with helping the Romans 'keep the peace'.]*
8. What is the dramatic effect of John's account here?

Implications

1. In what ways does the account here fulfil Jesus' earlier predictions?
2. What do you think you would have thought if you were one of Jesus' disciples?
3. What impact does this account have on you? How does it make you feel about Jesus?

Prayer suggestions

1. Thanks that Jesus was prepared to take the cup'
2. Praise for the type of Messiah Jesus proved to be.
3. Ask that we may honour Jesus for what he did.