

“Resolute Rendezvous” (Jn. 18:1-14)

1. **Garden of Designation** (1-2). A place of privacy (sanctuary) to pray but also to meet the betrayer (2). It was the perfect seclusion from the crowds (who might hinder Jesus’ apprehension making the arrest difficult or impossible cf. Lu. 22:6) and time (at night), and so Jesus determined to rendezvous with His betrayer.
2. **Garden of Darkness** (Context #1). Here is where the battle was won. Often battles and wars are won before their engagement. Because of superior strength, strategy, importunity, and conditioning; one side has secured victory before executing the plan. Jesus was met by the evil one and the dark forces on that night and in that garden of dark destiny. Although the victory had to be executed in earnest, our LORD engaged in a war of faith vs fear in an environment and situation that was – as it were- on the enemy’s field.
3. **Garden of Delight** (Context #2). A garden is a place of peace, rest, delight, and preferably providing sanctuary from the sun in the daylight. Gethsemane became a garden of darkness, unrest, trial, agony, confrontation, threat, and battle. Jesus left there victorious, albeit a willing captive. The two Gardens which frame the Bible are respectively the reason and result of this Garden where Jesus prevailed where Adam failed. Consider contrasts and parallels of Eden in *Genesis* and Gethsemane in *John*:
 - a. Adam hid (Gen. 3:8) and Jesus revealed Himself (vv. 4-8).
 - b. God sought Adam in love (Gen. 3:9) and authorities sought Jesus with animus (v. 3).
 - c. Adam was ashamed and afraid (Gen. 3:10) and Jesus was resolved and collected (vv. 4-8, 11).
 - d. Adam had a feeble attempt at the blame game (Gen. 3:12) and Jesus courageously offered Himself for His sheep (v. 8).
 - e. Adam enjoyed paradise, the light of day, and a helper, yet failed to trust the Word of God; yet Jesus was in a dark garden alone in agony while the disciples slept and would ultimately flee, yet He trusted the Word of God (v. 9).
4. **Garden of Devotion** (Conclusion). Jesus had used the restful location for devotions of rest and intimacy. And here was where Jesus devoted His very body to bear the cross and His will to drink the cup of wrath. Such was not a tragedy but a victory. The Holocaust was a tragedy but the battles which liberated the oppressed people was not. Sin is a tragedy but Jesus bearing our sins on the Cross is the pinnacle of beauty in sacrificial love. It is the pinnacle of righteous justice executed on Jesus so that our wretched sinfulness could be met with mercy. Application: I work for rest. I know that it is spiritual to say that we work for the LORD and for His Kingdom etc., but we really are working for a reward of peace, righteousness, and communion unhindered. I do not enjoy all my tasks and labor but I do them with peace and sometimes urgency, and sometimes approach them with dread. However, it is worth it all to represent my LORD and serve others. There is a great cloud of witnesses who left a legacy to follow and a great many witnesses watching how we perform.
5. **Apprehensive Captors** (3)
 - a. Many conspired and came with torches and weapons.
 - b. **18:3**. Only John specifies that, in addition to bringing the Jewish officials, Judas Iscariot also guided *a detachment of soldiers*. The Greek (*tēn speiran*) makes it clear that these were not Jews, but ‘*the cohort* (of Roman auxiliaries)’. A full auxiliary cohort had a paper strength of 1,000 men, *i.e.* 760 foot soldiers and 240 cavalry, and was led by a ‘chiliarch’ (lit. ‘leader of a thousand’, often translated ‘tribune’; v. 12, ‘commander’). In practice a cohort normally

numbered 600 men; but in any case the noun *speira* can refer to a ‘maniple’ of only 200 men, and it is not necessary to assume that an entire maniple was present.¹

6. **Composed Captive** (4-7)

- a. Though we are told in the Synoptics that Judas kissed Jesus as a sign, John emphasized that Jesus was prepared and waiting for the mob. Jesus, no doubt, heard and saw the multitude coming with torches and weapons but calmly “went forward” unto them and engaged, “Whom are you seeking?”
- b. His answer to their statement Jesus of Nazareth, was “I am” *not* “I am he.”
- c. The result was that “they went backwards and fell to the ground” v. 6.
- d. There is no provided detail of this amazing event. Jesus used the “I am” statement of divinity and then they – who came in number, authority, and weapons – all fell backwards and to the ground! Another glimpse of Jesus’ glory, authority, and power. No doubt that Jesus was willingly submitting to arrest. For if He did not it could not happen.
- e. His hour had now come and yet He still had to volitionally correspond. J. Ramsey Michaels summed up: “The reader of the Gospel is aware that this has happened more than once before (see 7:30, 32, 45–46; 8:20, 59; 10:39). What is more shocking is that the whole company “fell to the ground” as if vanquished by a greater army. Nothing in the Gospel of John—not the quantity of wine at Cana, not the five thousand fed with twelve baskets left over, not the pint of perfume at Bethany, not the load of spices at Jesus’ burial, not the net heavy with fish—quite matches the present scene. For that we have to go to Mark’s Gospel, where Jesus sent a “legion” of demons into a herd of “about two thousand” pigs (Mk 5:13), roughly one-third of a Roman legion—even more than the cohort or “band of soldiers” here in John’s Gospel (see v. 3). While there is no discernible link between the two passages, the enormity of the scene is comparable. The effect within John’s Gospel is to put a very large exclamation point after Jesus’ words spoken eight chapters earlier, “I lay down my life, that I might receive it back again. No one took it away from me, but I lay it down on my own” (10:17–18a). “No one!”²⁵—not even six hundred Roman soldiers, plus “officers both from the chief priests and from the Pharisees”—can take Jesus’ life from him. The “authority to lay it down,” like the “authority to receive it back” (10:18b), is his and his alone. This he will do, freely and voluntarily, “for the sheep” (10:15), as he will quickly demonstrate (v. 8).”²
- f. Michaels continued, “There is more than a touch of comedy here. As if nothing has happened, Jesus asks the Roman soldiers and Jewish officers lying on the ground the same question he asked before: “So again he asked them, ‘Whom are you seeking?’ ” Evidently picking themselves up and regaining their composure, they give the same answer, “Jesus the Nazorean” (v. 7).²⁶ Like a patient instructor explaining things to slow-witted pupils, he says again, “I told you that I am he. So if you are seeking me, let these go” (v. 8). This third occurrence of the characteristic “I am” formula within four verses (see vv. 5, 6) is as much for the reader’s benefit as for theirs. The reader has heard the formula again and again (6:20;

¹ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 577). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

²⁵ Gr. οὐδείς.

² Michaels, J. R. (2010). *The Gospel of John* (p. 891). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

²⁶ For a similarly comic touch, see 7:45–46.

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8:24, 28, 58; 13:19), and finds here a confirmation that Jesus is who he said he was all along. [cf. 13:19 seen below in internal footnote]^{27 3}

- g. Meditation: recorded events such as these provoke us to meditate. For example I think of Phil. 2:9-11 and how every knee will bow. Yet here they fall backward and to the ground. What is significant (and comedic/tragic) is that they get back up again to do as Jesus allows and instructs. So they are still willfully hardened. Yet in the resurrection, when all are fully illuminated and w/o excuse or darkness to keep themselves willfully ignorant, the reprobate will acknowledge Jesus as He should be acknowledged. There almost comical (getting up to apprehend Jesus after His two words knocked a couple hundred or more of them down) and tragic willful suppression of what had just happened reveals a depth of sinful desire for autonomy and the power of sin.
- h. Another meditation (included in the outline) is that* I literally lost my thought by a phone call. Sheesh!
- i. Many ironies are likely meant to be seen here e.g. a mixed multitude coming against a few non-threatening men. At full moon, they came with lanterns and torches – and yet to apprehend the Light of the world. They with swords and clubs come to arrest the Prince of peace. Though not detailed here by John, Jesus was most severely betrayed and yet with the most tender sign of affection viz. a kiss. On the most sacred night, they put into action the most devious of schemes. In the most secluded and peaceful locations, they bring a cohort of force. And after an agony of anticipation of the surety of things to come – Jesus calmly demonstrates authority and selfless compassion and care for His friends.

7. **Compliant Captors** (8-11)

- a. There is much irony in this passage and it goes deep. Here we see that the cohort of soldiers and Jewish authorities etc. [The company of captors consisted of the following: a. Judas, the guide b. The military tribune (chiliarch) c. The soldiers from the Tower of Antonia (probably in front) d. The temple-police (behind the soldiers, perhaps) e. Chief priests and elders (members of the Sanhedrin, perhaps many of them). See Luke 22:52. These probably held themselves somewhat in the background.]⁴ The lynch mob acquiesced to the single unarmed teacher. And they do so after Peter struck the servant of the high priest!
- b. V.11. Jesus assured Peter and the rest that such must take place (which the Scriptures prophesied v. 9 and He had assured during His ministry and in His previous discourse) and He was about to drink the prepared cup of wrath in which the penalty for the sins of all mankind was aimed.

8. **Conquering Captive** (12-14)

- a. Predestined Passion (12). It begins in earnest. Ps. 40:7-8 cf. Heb. 10:5; Eph. 4:8; Isa. 53.
- b. Kangaroo Courts (13). The first of more than several “hearings” e.g. before Annas, before Caiaphas, before Sanhedrin, before Pilate, before Herod Antipas, and back before Pilate.
- c. Parenthetical and Providential Point to Ponder (14). John points out that Annas’ son had prophesied pragmatically yet was ignorant to the profundity. The last Adam and true Israel was conquering as a “righteous” warrior, albeit with humility, discipline, and perfect faith!

²⁷ This is perhaps the element of truth in Schnackenburg’s proposal (above, n. 20) that this is in some sense a fulfillment of 13:19.

³ Michaels, J. R. (2010). *The Gospel of John* (pp. 891–892). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

⁴ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). *Exposition of the Gospel According to John* (Vol. 2, p. 383). Baker Book House.

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See Isa. 11:4-5; 59:16-17; Col. 2:15 – glory hallelujah! And so from eternity past, it was determined that Jesus would have a rendezvous in Gethsemane – the Garden of intrusion and agony where faith was employed to resolutely advance the Kingdom of righteousness via enduring cruel, violent, primitive, obscene, and vicious torture. Jesus wore the robe of righteousness dipped in blood – His very own – conquering all foes including temptation, fear, evil, sin, and death itself.