

John 17

- With this chapter, we come to the end of the time in the Upper Room at the Passover meal
 - Jesus has delivered His final instructions to His disciples
 - He has spoken to them plainly about His plan to depart and return to the Father
 - He has explained a little of what their future holds
 - And He has promised to empower them in special ways
 - All things they have yet to fully understand
 - There is only one thing remaining to be done before they leave this sanctuary: to intercede with the Father
 - Jesus is returning to the Father where He will take up His role as intercessor for the Church
 - And His work as Intercessor begins even now, before He departs the earth
 - Which raises the thought that perhaps Jesus begins to intercede here for effect
 - Perhaps He's showing the disciples how He intends to work after He departs
 - Certainly, Jesus is teaching and modeling for the disciples even as He is speaking to the Father
 - Therefore, as we consider what Jesus says, we'll also consider how Jesus prays
 - For if Jesus intended His prayer to be a model, then we do well to consider the model
- Jesus' prayer comprises the entire seventh chapter of John's Gospel
 - And it can be divided into three parts
 - The first part of prayer focuses on Jesus' mission on earth

- The second part focuses on the eleven men seated around Jesus who will become the apostles of the early church
- And the third part Jesus prays for the church overall
- Looking at the first section, Jesus makes two general requests of the Father
 - The first request is in vs. 1-4

[John 17:1](#) Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,

[John 17:2](#) even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.

[John 17:3](#) "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

[John 17:4](#) "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.

- Perhaps the first thing to notice is how Jesus addresses His prayer to the Father
 - Perhaps this seems obvious, since we might ask Who else would Jesus address?
 - But knowing this prayer forms a model as does the prayer Jesus provided in Matthew 6, we find the same pattern
 - When we pray, we're told to pray to the Father
 - Remember in chapter 16 Jesus had said this

[John 16:26](#) "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf;

[John 16:27](#) for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.

- Our prayers will go directly to the Father, Who hears us because of Jesus' intercession
 - Jesus says that He will not relay our prayer to the Father
 - Our Father loves us because of Jesus, so we have free access to the Father
 - And therefore, our prayers go directly to the Father because of Christ, not through Christ

- Jesus' agony and death was only hours away, so "the hour" refers to Jesus' time of passion
- Then Jesus asks the Father to glorify Him, which in this context means to bring Jesus through the crucifixion and into resurrected life
- We see in v.2 Jesus alluding to His resurrection when He says "even as You gave Me authority over all flesh..."
 - Jesus is given authority to judge the living and the dead
 - And all that the Father has given to Jesus, to these Jesus may grant eternal life
 - Notice again, Jesus reminds us that He is on a mission to save those the Father gives to Him
 - And eternal life is knowing the Father and the Son Whom the Father sent
- So Jesus asks the Father to glorify Jesus, by raising Jesus in the flesh
 - Having conquered death, Jesus would then have authority to judge all flesh
 - And in that judgment, Jesus will grant eternal life to those the Father elects
- Finally, Jesus explains that since Jesus has accomplished all the work the Father asked of Him, the Father is glorified on earth through His Son
 - Why is Jesus explaining this to the Father?
 - Once again, the answer is a model for prayer
 - Throughout this prayer, Jesus will offer the Father rationale for His requests
 - Perhaps the rationale is merely for the disciples' benefit
 - But it may also be true that the Father delights to hear His children revealing their reasoning for why they ask
 - This makes sense, since we know prayer is principally a means of aligning our hearts with God, rather than changing God's mind

- If we approach prayer with a expectation we should to explain our reasoning to God, then we will be required to work out our requests
- This is a healthy exercise, as we may find our requests changing as we think through what we truly wish God to do
- In this case, the Son's logic is perfect, as we would expect
 - He argues for the Father to resurrect the Son because doing so will ensure the Father's glorify is made complete on earth
 - Furthermore, the Son's resurrection will ensure He can deliver eternal life to God's elect, as the Father desires
 - Finally in v.4 Jesus says He has done what the Father asked, therefore Jesus is deserving of the Father's response
- Jesus second request is found in vs.5-8

John 17:5 "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

John 17:6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

John 17:7 "Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; **John 17:8** for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.

- Now Jesus asks for the Father to glorify Him in another way
 - Jesus asks for the glory He once knew before Jesus became incarnate
 - In His preincarnate form, Jesus was the Shechinah Glory of God visible to men
 - But the Bible says that when Jesus became incarnate, He gave up that glory

Phil. 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Phil. 2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Phil. 2:8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- In v.7 when Paul says that Christ “emptied” Himself, Paul is describing how Jesus gave up the glory He knew beforehand
 - He came in the likeness of men, which necessitated leaving His glory behind
 - That’s why Jesus appeared so ordinary according to scripture
- And again, Jesus offers the Father reasons to restore Jesus to the state of glory He knew before
 - First, Jesus says He has manifested the name of God before men
 - The Greek word for manifest simply means to make visible or clear
 - And that’s what Jesus did when He gave up His glorified position at the right hand of the Father
 - By coming as a man, Jesus showed the world the Father, Who is otherwise invisible
 - As Hebrews says

Heb. 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power...

- But also notice that this manifestation was only made to those the Father chose from out of the world
 - Not all men are appointed to see the glory of God in Christ
 - Only those who belong to the Father are included in this revealing
 - As you and I have come to know the Father through Christ, we are showing evidence we belong to the Father by keeping the word of Christ
 - In this context, keeping the word means obeying the call of the Gospel
- Furthermore, Jesus says His disciples have come to know that everything Jesus has come from the Father
 - Jesus words and works were from the Father

- He spoke truth given Him by the Father
- He performed miracles to demonstrate the power of God
- By these things, the elect have come to believe that Jesus has come from the Father
 - Therefore, if Jesus gave up His glory to make the Father known to men, then Jesus should receive back His glory once that plan is accomplished
 - We see this promise fulfilled upon His ascension
 - In fact, In Revelation John had the privilege of seeing Christ in His glorified form
- Now we move to the second part of the prayer, when Jesus prays for the eleven men in the room with Him
 - This section can be further divided into three sections
 - The first section concerns their physical preservation while they conduct their important mission on earth

[John 17:9](#) "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;

[John 17:10](#) and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.

[John 17:11](#) "I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.

[John 17:12](#) "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

[John 17:13](#) "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

[John 17:14](#) "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

- This section is directed at the apostles, as the context indicates (e.g., v.12)
 - Nevertheless, when Jesus turns to praying for all disciples in v.20, He adds that His concerns in these matters extends to the entire church

- In v.9, notice for the fourth time Jesus focuses only on the elect of God
- He says that He is not praying on behalf of the world, that is the unbelieving world
- Jesus asks on behalf those who belong to the Father
- Jesus prays this way to remain in the Father's will, praying for what He knows the Father wants
- Then, Jesus gives reasons for why the Father should preserve the apostles
 - These apostles belong to the Father
 - Since the Son and Father share everything, then Jesus' apostles are the Father's apostles
 - Therefore, the Father has a personal interest in preserving these men, as they are His disciples
- Secondly, Jesus says He is going to leave these men behind when He departs
 - Therefore, Jesus appeals to the Father to provide care in Jesus' absence
- Thirdly, at the end of v.11 Jesus asks the Father to make these men one
 - The Father should preserve these men so that they can act as a team, reflecting the unity that exist among the Godhead
- Fourthly, Jesus explains that the Father must care for these men to ensure none will perish
 - Jesus never allowed any to perish (except the evil son destined to perish)
 - That pattern is to continue for a time
 - Eventually, these men die, but Jesus is speaking of preserving them for the mission
- Finally, Jesus asks the Father to preserve the disciples because they will be like the prophets: carrying the word of God into a world that is hostile to that word

- Just as the world persecuted Jesus because He spoke the word of God, so will they persecute the apostles
- Jesus asks the Father to preserve these men so that they might accomplish this mission
- Next, Jesus prays for them to be physically and spiritually protected from Satan and his forces in the world

John 17:15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

John 17:16 "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

- Jesus doesn't ask the Father to remove these men from earth, for that would put a stop to the church's growth and expansion
 - It would have accomplished the preserving of the men
 - But at the expense of the movement of the Gospel
- So they must remain behind for a time, but then Jesus asks the Lord to protect them from the enemy
 - And the reason Jesus offers to the Father is quite simple
 - The apostles are not from the evil one
 - In other words, these eleven men have been born again by faith and therefore aren't of the world like Jesus
- So if the apostles are not part of the world, then they are not citizens in Satan's Kingdom
 - Now they are citizens of the Messiah's kingdom
 - They have been adopted into the family of God
 - They do not belong to the enemy
 - Consequently, Jesus appeals to the Father to provide supernatural protection to the apostles from Satan
- Lastly, Jesus asks that these men would be sanctified, that is to be made increasingly godly and holy in the conduct of their lives

[John 17:17](#) "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

[John 17:18](#) "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

[John 17:19](#) "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

- The Lord calls for the Father to sanctify these men, and notice the way Jesus asks that sanctification would take place
 - In the truth, which is the word of God written for our behalf
 - And Jesus' reasoning for why the Father should honor this request is because of their unique mission to enter the world
 - As God's representatives, it's especially important that they carry a testimony of godliness
 - So Jesus asks that the Father sanctify these men
 - Furthermore, Jesus reminds the Father that He sanctified Himself for their sakes
 - Jesus lived an obedient, sinless life to ensure He could save them from sin
 - For only a sinless sacrifice could suffice to pay their penalty for sin
 - So Jesus argues that the Father has a self-interest and responsibility to sanctify these men by His word
 - To convict them of their sin
 - To instruct them in righteousness
 - To grant them the courage and desire to obey
 - So that as they become more holy, they become more effective in their ministry representing the Gospel
 - And the Father should do these things because Jesus did them first
- Isn't Jesus' approach to prayer fascinating? Have you ever considered organizing your prayer life in this fashion?
 - Here's a suggestion you might follow the next time you sit down to pray

- Make out a list of the requests you desire the Lord to meet
- Then write out 1 or 2 reasons why it would be righteous for God to give you what you seek
- And then incorporate those reasons into your prayers
- Instead of just asking God repeatedly with the same words or an extra “please” in front, ask Him as you would make a case to your boss or spouse
 - The first thing you’re bound to do is think more carefully about what you’re asking God for
 - You’ll notice when your requests are not easy to defend from the perspective of righteousness
 - You will probably modify your requests so that they are easier to defend on that basis
- And in those ways, your requests will more quickly come into alignment with the will of God
 - And as your requests align with His will, you are going to see your requests answered affirmatively more often
 - Also, you’re going to sense yourself growing closer to the Father, as your prayer life becomes less a rigorous, ritualistic enumeration of requests
 - And turns into a conversation, rich and deep with purpose
- Moving to the final section of the prayer regarding all believers, Jesus makes two requests of the Father, beginning in vs.21-23

John 17:20 “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

John 17:21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

John 17:22 “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;

John 17:23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

- Jesus now makes requests of the Father for the body of disciples as a whole

- Notice Jesus defines clearly how His disciples are going to be made
- It will be those who believe in the word of God
- The growth of the church is dependent on the spread of the word of God
- Any time Jesus' disciples are engaged in bringing the word to the world, it is a worthwhile endeavor
- And then Jesus requests that this growing body would be "one" like the Son and the Father are one
 - Notice Jesus prays both for a specific outcome based on a specific standard
 - First, we are to be united in identity, as the Son was one with His Father
 - We are all made into one body by a common baptism of the Spirit, Paul says
- Secondly, we are of one mind, being taught according to the one and only word of God
 - There are not multiple ways into the faith that saves
 - There are not multiple sources of truth
 - Just as Jesus knew the Father's will and did it, so do all true Christians know the truth of Christ in His word (though to varying degrees)
- Finally, as Jesus did the works of His Father, so will believers be united in working to a common goal, which is the spread of the Gospel to the glory of Christ
 - Within the true body, the works we do are intended to bring about a shared desire
 - Which is for more men and women to know Christ and to glorify Him
- So Jesus asks the Father that the church would be united in identity, in knowledge of the truth and in works...and yet we see around us that this is not the case

- Within the body of Christ we seem to find many divisions, many differences of opinion, different agendas, don't we?
 - First, we have divisions called denominations
 - What is a denomination except a division?
 - And by these denominations, we assume different identities (I'm a Baptist vs. I'm a Methodist)
 - Certainly we can find different interpretations of scripture
 - And through these divisions, we also see different goals for the church
 - Some groups pursue social justice
 - Others pursue bettering the individual circumstances of believers
 - Still others emphasize biblical education or missions
- So are we to conclude that the Father hasn't given Christ what He requested in this case?
 - No, because we're judging these outcomes from human perspective
 - The enemy has certainly seeded division and confusion within the Church, as the Lord knew He would
 - That's why Jesus asked earlier that we would be kept from the evil one
 - And the Father has certainly answered that prayer
 - What the enemy has managed to accomplish in disrupting the Church is merely superficial
 - He has created the appearance of division
 - Baptists may think themselves different from Methodists and vice versa
 - But these divisions are illusions
 - They certainly cause friction but they are not impediments for the Spirit

- In reality, the Spirit creates harmony within the body despite these superficial divisions
 - For true believers, those born again by the Spirit, everything Jesus asked is absolutely true, though we may not see it ourselves because we have believed the enemy's lie
 - We have but one identity, which is Christian
 - When I travel and teach I associate with many different groups of believers, And it never ceases to amaze me how alike these groups are
 - Yet at the same time, these groups view themselves as unique and they can sometimes be suspicious of other groups
 - But every body of believers I've visited has the same Bible questions, the same desire to serve Christ, the same heart for God's word and the same struggles with sin
 - Yes, doctrinal differences do exist in the body, but that is just the consequence of varying degrees of spiritual maturity
 - We will always have this challenge in the body
 - Even within a denomination, you can find individuals who vary in their understanding of Christian theology
 - This isn't proof of division, just opportunity to teach
 - Paul was dealing with this problem in his own day even before denominations emerged

[Col. 2:6](#) Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,
[Col. 2:7](#) having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

[Col. 2:8](#) See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

- Naturally, if the maturity in our understanding of God's varies, so will our works
 - Those who are more spiritually mature will do the works that Jesus did and in the way He did...by the Spirit

- The Father's answer to Jesus' prayer is evident in the way mature Christians universally arrive at a similar pattern of serving Christ and ministering to the world in His name
- And as maturity varies, so will behavior, even to the point of some believers having few if any noticeable works of faith
- Once again, these variations are not evidence that Jesus' prayer wasn't answered
- They merely reflect the variation of maturity in the body
- Notice Jesus' reasoning to the Father for why He should grant this request
 - At the end of v.21 and v.23 Jesus says this request will ensure the world knows that the Father sent Jesus and loved Jesus
 - In other words, Jesus is saying that a unified Church will impress the world that this group of people have truly heard from God
 - Unity makes the church more effective at the mission of representing the Gospel and Christ to the world
 - Unity impresses in this way, because unity is so abnormal within sinful, selfish humanity
 - So that when it exists, it presents proof of a supernatural force binding the group
 - In a sense, this principle explains the attraction of cults
 - They are so unified (in an unhealthy way) that they impress prospective followers
 - Of course, the difference is that cults achieve this unity in an artificial way, through close control, strict rules, intimidation and peer pressure
 - Whereas the body of Christ remains unified across space and time, not by rules but the Spirit and the word
 - So what does it say when we seek division?
 - When we adopt denominational creeds?
 - When we label our gatherings by names other than simply "Christian"?

- Aren't we working against Christ's desires, creating divisions and thereby diminishing the witness of the church?
- Finally, Jesus asks the Father to accomplish the glorification of the church

John 17:24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

John 17:25 "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me;

John 17:26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

- Jesus requests that the believers on earth would be granted the same glorification that the Father is prepared to grant to Christ following His crucifixion
 - Following the death of this body, believers will receive a new physical body, one we enjoy for eternity
 - Paul teaches in 1Cor 15 that this new body is incorruptible
 - Meaning that in this new body, we will be like Christ in that we will never die again and will not sin
 - This will be our glorified state

Phil. 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

Phil. 3:21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

- We will be with Christ in this state, and we will witness Christ in His glorified state
- Our glory is different than Christ's glory though
 - Christ is inherently glorious, having one with the Father from all eternity
 - In fact, we know Christ gave up His glory to become like man, which tells us that humanity possesses a lessor glory than does Christ

- Before the Fall, Adam existed in the likeness of God's image
 - And by faith, we are made new again in that likeness

[Eph. 4:24](#) and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

- Even after faith, however, our glory is but a reflection of His glory, not the fullness of it
- Like the way the moon reflects the sun's glory

[2Cor. 3:18](#) But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

- Jesus asks that every believer enter into this state of glory and once again Jesus lays out reasons why this should be the case
 - First Jesus says the believer must be glorified if we are to ever see and appreciate Christ's glory
 - This is a simple but profound truth
 - Unless we are like Him, we will never see Him again

[Heb. 12:14](#) Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

- The writer says the church should pursue the sanctification of men, without which none will see the Lord
- He means seek to be at peace with all men so that we might bring them the Gospel, the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord
- Jesus' argument before the Father is that God's entire plan of redemption was intended to reunite fallen Man and all Creation with the Creator
 - And this can only be accomplished by glorifying men
 - Without that glorification, they cannot enter into the presence of the risen Lord, as Paul explains

[1Cor. 15:50](#) Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

- The second reason Jesus offers the Father for glorifying the church is His love
 - The Son has made known the Father's name and His love for the Son
 - And now by the Spirit, the Son will place the love of the Father in each disciple
 - And therefore, the Father's love will be with each believer
 - Certainly, those the Father loves will be received by the Father
 - Christ tells the Father He should glorify the believers because of His love
 - As Paul says:

[2Tim. 2:13](#) If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

- And so the prayer concludes
 - Jesus made His intercession public so that you and I would have encouragement to know that these outcomes aren't in doubt
 - Christ's intercession assures us that the Father will honor these requests
- At this point in John's Gospel, the scene in the Upper Room ends abruptly, and the last stage of Jesus earthly life quickly follows
 - This week, we will enter into chapter 18 just briefly to study the betrayal of Jesus

[John 18:1](#) When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples.

[John 18:2](#) Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples.

[John 18:3](#) Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

- When Jesus and the eleven disciples leave the upper room, they cross the Kidron Valley and walk up the slopes of the Mount of Olives and enter the Garden of Gethsemane

- According to the other Gospels, Jesus asks eight of the eleven to stand guard at the entrance of the garden and to remain in prayer

[Mark 14:32](#) They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed."

[Mark 14:33](#) And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled.

[Mark 14:34](#) And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch."

[Mark 14:35](#) And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by.

[Mark 14:36](#) And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will."

[Mark 14:37](#) And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?"

[Mark 14:38](#) "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

- Notice that Jesus asks the apostles to pray for themselves that they might avoid temptation
- But they couldn't find the strength to do so, as Jesus finds them sleeping
- Clearly, they had no appreciation of the gravity of the situation
- But Jesus did, and His fear and anxiety is evident
 - How can we not sympathize?
 - Jesus knew what was coming
 - And He even asked the Father to seek a different solution if He could
- Jesus' request in Mark 14:36 is proof by itself that another solution for sin wasn't available for the Father
 - The only way to reconcile men to the Father was by the sacrificial death of Christ
 - And yet in His humanity, He is desperate for an alternative

- As Luke reports, the pressure Jesus felt was so great, it caused small blood vessels near his skin to break, leading Him to sweat blood
- John's account skips past these details, since they were already available in the other Gospels
 - For John, the emphasis will be on the manner of betrayal and the events that cascaded immediately afterward
 - Judas reappears as the betrayer
 - Here we see why a betrayer was required: someone was needed to lead the authorities to Jesus' location
 - Judas knew that Jesus spent the night in the Garden
 - And therefore, Judas could be useful to the Jewish authorities who want to arrest Jesus at the right moment
 - Timing was everything for the Jews and Romans
 - During the Passover week, the city was filled with pilgrims
 - Finding Jesus among the crowd was like looking for a needle in a haystack
 - During the day, Jesus would emerge and could be found teaching in the temple
 - But arresting Jesus in front of adoring crowds was a recipe for a riot
 - So capturing Jesus at night away from the crowds was key, but how would they find Jesus? They needed someone on the inside to give away His location
 - Judas was that betrayer
 - And this was the very reason Jesus included Judas in His inner circle
 - Judas is a great case study in the sovereignty of God in His conflict with Satan
 - Jesus picked Judas, Jesus orchestrated the timing of Judas' action and made Himself available when the time came

- God works through sin and the enemy as needed to accomplish His plan
- But when the Lord uses Satan for His own purposes, we can't jump to the conclusion that the enemy is winning
- God is never not in control of Satan, even as Satan thinks he has the upper hand
- This was true with Jesus and Judas and it will be true in whatever circumstances we face
- As Judas approaches, he brings with him a cohort of Romans soldiers (several hundred men) complete with torches (and maybe pitchforks)
 - All this show of force was not because Jesus was such a threat
 - Even the torches were unnecessary, since Passover takes place on a full moon
 - The concern was for what Jesus' disciples might do in response to the arrest
 - This is crowd control through intimidation arranged by Jewish enemies of Christ
 - Notice the soldiers are being led by officers of the priests, which refers to the Jewish authorities over the temple
 - It's also appropriate that Jesus would be arrested in darkness
 - For a moment, it would appear that darkness will reign
 - Luke records Jesus' words to those coming to arrest Him

[Luke 22:52](#) Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber?"

[Luke 22:53](#) "While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours."

- The timing of Jesus betrayal and arrest were also planned by the Lord to ensure the picture was complete
- We must understand this moment as the work of the enemy, the prince of darkness

- As we move into the trial and passion of Christ, John will highlight certain details, often overlooked by the other Gospels, which work to show Jesus as a voluntary participant in this process
 - Though the scene opens with a show of force and a formal arrest, none of what follows could happen without Jesus' willing consent
 - Jesus has the power to stop this process at any time
 - This makes His suffering and death all the more remarkable
 - And it reflects Jesus' obedience to the will of the Father
 - It's one thing to submit to a process in the beginning (e.g., to turn one's self into the authorities)
 - But it's another thing altogether to continually submit to severe abuse knowing you have the ability to stop it at any time
 - So now look at how John reveals Jesus' willingness to submit

John 18:4 So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, "Whom do you seek?"

John 18:5 They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am He." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them.

John 18:6 So when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.

John 18:7 Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene."

John 18:8 Jesus answered, "I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way,"

John 18:9 to fulfill the word which He spoke, "Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one."

- First, John says Jesus knew what was coming and therefore why these soldiers were here
 - At that point, Jesus voluntarily approached the men, not waiting for them to figure out Who Jesus was
 - We know from the other Gospels that Jesus is betrayed by a kiss from Judas
 - But John wants his readers to understand that it wasn't the kiss that resulted in Jesus being identified

- Jesus was intent on being found, otherwise He never would have remained in the Garden to begin with
- Secondly, notice that Jesus initiates the conversation, asking them Who they seek?
 - When they name Jesus, He identifies Himself plainly with “I am He”
 - Literally, Jesus said It is I, which is a natural thing to say in response to the question
 - But it’s also a statement Jesus has used in the past to identify Himself as deity
- Here it seems to have both the ordinary and supernatural meaning
 - For as soon as Jesus speaks the words, the entire contingent of men drew back and fell to the ground
 - Different views exists as to what happens in this moment
 - But it seems to me that since these men get right back up and arrest Jesus, it couldn’t be explained as a voluntary act on their part
- Instead, it seems to be the supernatural power of God’s word
 - As Paul says:

[Phil. 2:10](#) so that at the name of Jesus **EVERY KNEE WILL BOW**, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

- The name of Christ puts these men on the ground at least for the moment
- John has recorded this detail to emphasize how little power this crowd truly had to accomplish what they sought
 - Had Jesus not voluntarily agreed to go with them, not even a cohort of soldiers could have arrested Him
 - In fact, notice Jesus has to prompt them to get on with their mission
 - He says in v.7 He asks them to repeat their purpose

- It's as though He has to remind them why they've come or else they might leave empty handed
- Then Jesus makes clear that He alone will be arrested in this moment
 - His disciples are not to be touched
 - And sure enough, not a single apostle is arrested or harmed during all the turmoil surrounding Jesus' death
 - This is highly unusual given what would have been expected
 - If a rogue rabbi is arrested and executed, his disciples would have been equally likely to be killed
 - But to fulfill the word that Jesus spoke in His prayer, not one of those given to Him were lost
 - Further proof to us of the effectiveness of the prayer Jesus spoke