

Christ's Prophecies - Kevin Miller, 30 minutes, **John 18:1-18** (#505)

Introduction: In reading through John's gospel, we need to periodically remind ourselves *why* John wrote, otherwise we might start to assume reasons that aren't found anywhere in the book. At the very end of **chapter 20**, John writes: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." Whatever else we glean from this book, we *must* come away with two things: first, that Jesus did all kinds of things that John didn't include. Frankly, that's one of the blessings of having not just one gospel, but four. The things John was inspired to include are those that directly serve his purpose. And what was the purpose? That's the second takeaway: under God's direction, John wrote so that those who read his book would see who Jesus is and would come to trust Him as the Anointed One, the Son of God. John's gospel, then, is explicitly evangelistic. That is its point.

And my point in reminding us of these facts is because they'll give you and I some of the necessary purpose for our passage today. This morning, we'll read of four prophecies that are either fulfilled or are in the process of being fulfilled now that Christ's "hour" has come. There are many other things that we could talk about, both here in John and in the other gospels, but our focus needs to be squarely on the Messiah. All that He has said is what is now happening. Let's see it come together in **John 18**...

18:1-3 The upper room teaching of Christ has come to its conclusion and so has His wonderful prayer that applied not only to the disciples, but even to those – like us! – who have come into the faith later. Now, we move from the upper room into the final events of Christ's life on this side of the cross.

He and the disciples head out towards a garden. Apparently, we read, this was a normal meeting place for Jesus and the disciples, someplace that they had habitually spent time in. Judas – and note how John keeps reminding us of Judas'

betrayal – also knew of this place because he had been there with Christ and the other disciples a number of times.

What does Judas do? We read that he didn't just turn this information over to the pharisees, as if Judas was only an informant or a spy. No, we see something even darker, if that were possible: Judas personally leads the soldiers and officers to where Jesus and the disciples are in the garden. Make no mistake: Judas didn't simply make an error in judgment, nor was his crime against our Savior one of only passing on information to the Pharisees. Rather, Judas has taken an active role. John tells us that it was Judas who "procured" these soldiers. He isn't just looking to see the Pharisees do the dirty work, but instead Judas himself is raising a hand against Jesus. He is guiding these troops to where he knows Christ will be.

If this entire chapter is about prophecies fulfilled, then we start off here with Judas' betrayal. Jesus Himself knew what was coming, knew what would happen – in fact, He specifically and clearly said so in **John 13:21, 26-27**.

In all of the events that are to follow, you and I must not miss the details on account of the very real and very tragic outcome. Instead, notice here at the start: Jesus predicted that Judas would betray Him, and that is exactly what is happening. Make no mistake, then: what looks like tragedy to us is actually part of the Father's plan for Christ's hour.

On a very personal level, Jesus Himself also made clear that there will be times when God's people are betrayed not by the world around them, but by some of those closest to them. As shocking as that is when it happens; as hurtful and scarring as it is, we shouldn't be surprised. Recognize this: our world, for all of its niceties and "tolerance," hates Jesus. If you stand with Christ, if you call upon Him for salvation, then you – too – shall be opposed. Perhaps even by those closest to you. The only way to have hope in such situations isn't to become defensive or paranoid, but rather to look to Christ. He is our God. He is in control. Trust Him.

We see Judas' betrayal. Next: let's see the disciples protected...

18:4-11 John once more reminds us – as if we could forget! – that Jesus knows all that this night would bring. The mob has arrived with Judas and Jesus steps forward, asking who they are looking for. Jesus knows, of course. But part of knowing is also making abundantly clear to everyone present what is really going on. The mob replies that they are looking for Jesus of Nazareth. Christ doesn't try to play dumb, He doesn't try to distract the crowd. Instead, He replies "I am He." Or, more literally in the Greek, "I Am" – which is important when you realize that "I Am" is what got Jesus in trouble in the first place, since the Pharisees recognized that Jesus calling Himself that meant that He was calling Himself God, just like the Lord did back in **Exodus 3:14**.

Much has been made of the crowd falling back to the ground when Jesus declares this. I don't want to go beyond the Scriptures here – and John himself makes no further comment on it. Perhaps we could say that it is something about Jesus declaring Himself which causes their reaction; the weight of His undeniable glory.

Jesus asks again whom the crowd is seeking, and they once more ask for Jesus of Nazareth. But this time, Christ responds differently: not only does He tell the mob that He has already identified Himself, but also that they should let the rest of the disciples go. This last part is what John focuses upon: Jesus protects the disciples by offering Himself alone. He doesn't ask for the disciples to defend Him – in fact, His words to Peter in **verses 10-11** show that He very clearly *does not want* to be defended. Christ's hour is here – and He will go to the end that has been appointed for Him. The disciples, on the other hand, have a different mission and a different destiny. As much as we Americans are really attracted to heroes going down in a blaze of glory, the disciples' mission is different – they are to take Jesus' teachings to the world. And they must not fail in that. So, just as Christ prayed in **17:12**, the disciples are protected from danger and arrest at this point.

Here, see again a theme that has come up repeatedly in John's gospel: part of faith is trusting that Christ knows best. In spite of Peter's reaction, Jesus doesn't need defending. Sometimes we think that we need to help God out, perhaps with

sticky situations or with how we explain or defend Him to others. We do not. As John Currid, a professor of archaeology, points out: “The Bible doesn’t need defending. It is perfectly capable of defending itself.” Friends: don’t take matters into your own hands. God is sovereign. All you and I need do is be faithful to what He has called us to as Christians. The Lord really will take care of everything.

Judas, the disciples. Now third: Caiaphas’ prophecy...

18:12-14 This third fulfillment might seem a strange one to bring up, since it didn’t come from the lips of Jesus. Yet it was no less intended by our Lord. The soldiers and their officers bind Jesus and take Him first to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest. We could spend a lot of time diagramming the political structure of the Jews at this point, but John’s attention is elsewhere: it is Caiaphas who said back in **John 11:50-52** that it would be best for the nation if one man would die for all the people. Here, we are reminded of that fact, which is a bit of foreshadowing for what will happen. Of course, Caiaphas spoke better than he knew, because Jesus’ death wasn’t for the political fortunes of Israel – far from it, since the Romans would absolutely decimate the nation in just a few short decades. Instead, Jesus would die for the people – and His death would accomplish eternal life for everyone who believes, for everyone who would become one of His people.

From this, take two points: the first is that the wicked may plan and plot, but – just as **Psalms 2** teaches, they aren’t actually in control. Only the Lord is in control. No matter how wicked or evil of a plan that folks here on earth come up with, God is not surprised, and He allows nothing to happen outside of His own control. Whatever other questions that brings up in your mind and mine, let us acknowledge that God’s control, His sovereignty, His providence is a wonderful thing! We must and should be thankful for it.

Second: Christ died for His people. Are you one of them? Do you trust this Savior? Don’t miss the point of John’s gospel or his highlighting of each of these fulfilled prophecies. Jesus can only be God to not just say such things, but also to have

them happen so precisely. Do you trust Him? Have you called upon Him as your Savior? Do you follow Him each day and call upon Him to change your heart?

Judas' betrayal, the disciples' protection, Caiaphas' prophecy. Let's close with John's last point: Peter's denial...

18:15-18 We read of how Peter gained entrance to the courtyard of the high priest. It's interesting that the sequence of events here couldn't be made up – Christ's prophecy of Peter's denial could only happen if Peter could get into the courtyard. That could only happen if somebody could gain him entrance and another of the disciples – I think it is likely John himself, though that's not certain – does exactly that. Only then was Peter in a position to be questioned about his faith. And Jesus predicted this perfectly in **John 13:37-38**.

I think it is sad that Peter so quickly denies Jesus when he is confronted not by a tribunal or a priest or a soldier, but by a servant girl at the door. Nothing against the girl, but she was hardly a threat in those days. Even if she went and told somebody in power, her testimony likely wouldn't have been believed. And yet, the more I read of Peter's denial the more I am, myself, convicted. Sometimes it isn't the big trials that get to us, but the small ones. Trying to save face. Making the wrong choice in the moment. Falling back onto our sinful patterns rather than looking to the Spirit for help. I've done that. Sadly, I'm sure I will in the future. You probably have, too. So as serious as Peter's denial is, none of us are any better.

I think **verse 18** is significant. It's not just that Peter is cold, but that after denying Jesus, he goes and stands not only with the household servants, but also with some of the officers – perhaps the same ones who arrested Jesus. By his denial, Peter stands with Christ's accusers, quite literally. He finds comfort with them rather than with the Savior. Friends: left to our own devices, our strength, our courageous words, quickly turn to cowardice and sin. None of us is strong enough on our own. None of our "best" is good enough. So I close with one last truth: trust Christ's strength. Look to His forgiveness. He is the Savior. His hour has come. Trust Him. Love Him. Treasure His grace. And now, let's worship Him...