

DETAILS OF THE EASTER STORY (YOU MAY HAVE MISSED)

- ✓ Sometimes, when we read a familiar passage of Scripture, we find ourselves “reading on auto pilot”. (Do you know what I mean by that? You’re *reading*, but you’re not *fully engaged*. You’re not noticing *details*.) When that happens, you miss a lot. Let’s look at some details that people have missed as they read the Easter story.

A. The Arrest in Gethsemane

- ✓ For years, I pictured Judas showing up in Gethsemane with maybe a half a dozen soldiers. But that’s not how it happened.

John 18:3 – “Judas then, having received **a band (cohort) of men** from the Chief Priests and Pharisees.”

- ✓ A *cohort* is a tenth of a *legion*. (That’s 600 men!) That’s why Matt. 26:47 says: “As he was still speaking, Judas appeared, and with him **a great multitude** with swords and clubs ...”
- ✓ This wasn’t a handful of soldiers. *Hundreds* of men came to arrest Jesus! (That only makes what we’re about to read more impressive.)

Supernatural Events in Gethsemane

1.) The Soldiers Were Thrown to the Ground by the Power of God

John 18:6 – “Jesus fully realized all that was about to happen to him. Stepping forward to meet them he asked, ‘Whom are you looking for?’ ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. **‘I am he,’** Jesus said.”

- ✓ You’ll notice that the word “he” is in italics. (That Means: the word “he” wasn’t in the Greek. It was added by the translators, to aid our understanding.)
- ✓ What Jesus really said was, “**I Am**”. That’s the Name God used for Himself when He spoke to Moses from the burning bush (Ex. 3:14).

- ✓ When Jesus said, “I Am”, the soldiers fell backwards (under the power of God.) I can’t find *any* commentator who thinks they took a couple of steps backward and “sat down”. No, they were blown off their feet by the power of God! 600 armed soldiers!

2.) The Healing of Malchus’ Ear –

John 18:7,8,10 – “Then he asked them again, ‘Who is it that you’re seeking?’ ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ they said. ‘I told you I am he,’ Jesus replied. ‘So if you’re looking for me, let these men go.’ Simon Peter had brought along a sword. He pulled it out and struck at Malchus, the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear.”

- ✓ You do know Peter wasn’t aiming for his ear, right? (He was aiming for his head! Malchus ducked, and the sword caught his ear!) Jesus healed him in front of everyone. What tremendous proof that Jesus *was* who He *said* He was! Yet they *still* arrested Him.

Verse 12 – “Then the cohort, and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound him.” (We’ll have to switch to Mark’s gospel at this point. The next event is only recorded by Mark.)

3.) The Naked Young Man – (This may be the most curious detail in this entire sequence of events.)

Mark 14:51-52 — “Then all the disciples deserted him and made their escape. There was, however, a young man **following along behind, having a linen cloth thrown over his naked body**. They tried to arrest him: and he left the cloth in their hands and ran away naked.”

- ✓ So, here’s the scene. As the soldiers were leading Jesus away, and as the disciples were fleeing, a young man was following along in the background, wearing only a linen cloth.
- ✓ When the soldiers tried to grab him, the cloth fell to the ground and the young man ran away naked. (Do you remember reading that before? A lot of Christians don’t.)

- ✓ People have offered all kinds of suggestions, to explain who this fellow was. Some have suggested that perhaps it was John. They've said, "When John saw the soldiers coming, he took off all his clothes as a distraction". (I'm sorry, that's just silly. How would *that* have helped?)
- ✓ Gethsemane was more than the little group of trees we see in Easter paintings. It covered nearly the entire slope of the Mount of Olives. There were multiple caves there, as well as a cemetery. Why do I bring that up? Because it presents a theory that's worth considering.
- ✓ Remember the linen cloth? The Greek word used here is "sindon". Every time we see this word in Scripture, it refers to a burial shroud (Matthew 27:59; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53).
- ✓ This fellow had a burial shroud "thrown over" his naked body. Why? He was dead! It seems that the "blast of power" that knocked the soldiers down, made it as far as the graveyard, and raised this fellow from the dead. (When he revived, he grabbed the burial shroud & headed down the Mountain. He was following a little way behind Jesus. When the soldiers tried to grab the young man, he dropped the burial shroud and ran.)
- ✓ So, what have we seen so far? A blast of power that knocked 600 soldiers off their feet, a miraculous healing, and a resurrection! All while Jesus was being arrested! Those events prove that Jesus was not overpowered. Through every part of His arrest, He remained in control.

John 10:17-18 – "I lay down my life ... **No one takes it away from me.** I lay it down voluntarily."

- ✓ If you find the "young man" theory hard to believe, remember that he's not the only one who was raised from the dead in the Easter story (Matt. 27:50-53). Can you imagine that? "Hey mom! Grampa's back!" Like Lazarus, those people would have eventually died again. But, for as long they lived, they were a tremendous testimony to the truth of the Gospel.

B. The Whipping Scene

- ✓ We all know that Jesus was scourged. But few have an accurate picture of scourging. The whip they used was called a "cat-o-nine-tails." It consisted of a handle and nine leather cords. Pieces of bone, metal, or lead were embedded in the ends.
- ✓ Jewish law limited the punishment to 39 stripes, but Roman soldiers *had* no such law. Two soldiers alternated blows. They'd stop intermittently to check for a pulse. If they found one, the beating continued. They wanted Him left barely alive (Isa. 52:14).

C. Peter vs. Judas

- ✓ Several comparisons could be made between Peter and Judas. In one sense, they *both* betrayed the Master. Both were unfaithful. Here's the main difference: What Peter did, he did because of the weakness of the flesh.

Matt. 26:41 – "Stay awake and pray, so that you won't enter into temptation. **The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.**"

- ✓ Did you know that Jesus said that specifically to Peter (v. 40)? What Peter did, he did from the weakness of the flesh. But what Judas did, he did from the heart.

John 13:2 – "And supper being ended, the devil having now **put into the heart of Judas** Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him."

Judas Repented

Matt. 27:3 – "When Judas learned that Jesus had been condemned, **he repented** and took back the thirty silver coins to the chief priests."

- ✓ Wait, what? Judas repented? Does that mean that Judas was forgiven? No, Judas wasn't forgiven. He's called the son of perdition (ICB – "the one who is going to hell"), and after death it says, "he went to his own place (hell)".

- ✓ But, if Judas *repented*, why wasn't he forgiven? Because Judas' repentance wasn't *true* repentance. The (Greek) word that's translated "repented" indicates merely an *emotional* change.
- ✓ **Thayer, Zodhiates**: "It expresses the desire that what has been *done* could be *undone*, accompanied with regret, or even remorse, but **with no effective change of heart**. It's really nothing more than a selfish dread of the consequences."

D. The Jewish Leaders Had Solid Proof of the Resurrection

- ✓ The Roman guards reported the truth of the Resurrection to the Jewish leaders, yet they *still* rejected Jesus.

Matt. 28:1-13 – "Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb. Suddenly there was a **great earthquake!** An **angel of the Lord came down from heaven**, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. **His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow.** **The guards shook when they saw him** and **fell to the ground** paralyzed with fear.

Then the angel **spoke** to the women. 'Don't be afraid!' he said. 'I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! **He is risen**, just as he said. Come, see where his body was lying. And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that **he has risen from the dead**, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you.' The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message ... As the women were on their way, **some of the guards went into the city** and **told the chief priests all the things that had happened.**"

- ✓ What were "the things that had happened"? The earthquake. The angel. The words, "He's not here, He's risen". The guards *told* the Pharisees all of it! (Think about it! The guards had nothing to gain from a false story! They were the most neutral witnesses anyone could hope for. And *they* said Jesus is alive!) And how did the religious leaders respond? They bribed the guards to lie about it.