

Father, The Hour Has Come

John 17: 1-5

On the walk to Gethsemane, close to midnight,
the fifteenth of Nisan

DIG: Once **Jesus** was arrested, what was to be done next? If **Messiah** did not confess, who would have been the most important witness? Why? Why do you think Pilot cooperated and sent a cohort of troops? What advantages would Caiaphas gain if the Romans participated in **the Lord's** arrest? For whom did **Yeshua** pray here? How does this prayer depict **God the Son's** relationship with **God the Father**? What about this prayer impresses you the most? Why?

REFLECT: When you look at the state of world affairs, what does it mean to you that **ADONAI** gave **Jesus** the nations for **His** inheritance, and the ends of the earth for **His** possession? Since we are a gift, could **Christ** ever lose a gift from **the Father**? What can you learn from this passage about the purpose and practice of prayer?

It was the calm before the storm. At midnight the great gates of the Temple would open and many of the early risers would bring offerings, and the poor would beg for alms and meat in the outer courts on this holy feast of Pesach.

But now **Yerushalayim** was still under the full moon and the only sounds that could be heard came from the northwest corner of **the City**. There, leaving the double archway of Fortress Antonia was a cohort of Roman soldiers, their heavy sandals making a rhythmic scouring sound on the paved stone. Ordinarily, a centurion would command such a legion as this, but **Caiaphas**, in **his** plea for assistance from the Romans, overstated **his** case and the one who led this detachment was the tribune himself - the ranking military man at Antonia.

Fortress Antonia was massive. It was built by Herod the Great for the defense of the Temple area and located at the northwestern corner of the Temple. Herod (see **Av - The Visit of the Magi**) renamed the fortress in honor of his old army buddy, Mark Antony. It was roughly rectangular in form. The east and west length has been estimated at approximately 490 feet and the north, south figure was 260 feet. The L-shaped tower of Antonia rose to a height of 105 feet, standing on a rock 75 feet high itself. Prominent high towers projected at each of the corners. They were said to be 75 feet high, except for the southeast corner, which overlooked the Temple and was 100 feet high.

Antonia was used as barracks for the hated Roman garrison that kept watch over Isra'el. As a result, the Sanhedrin relocated their meeting place from the chamber of polished stones in corner of the Temple itself, to the southeastern corner of the Royal Stoa (see **My - The Royal Stoa**) to get as far away from Antonia as they could. Indeed, the towers and the fortress, with its squares, buildings and porches, must have looked almost like a small town on its rocky height. Part of it lay within the walls of the Temple compound and for that reason the Jews hated it. To them it was like an exposed nerve in a large molar.¹⁴⁶⁹

The tribune understood the legalities of the situation. He was not to meddle in the arrest because blasphemy against the Jewish deity was not a crime against Rome; so there was no statute under the rule of the Empire on which this rebel could be tried. This was a Jewish problem. The Romans were dealing with a provincial **troublemaker** who, somehow or other, had hurt the prestige and practices of the Jewish religious leaders. All the tribune had to do was to assist **the Temple guard** in executing the orders of **the high priest**. However, the Romans would be fully authorized to beat any Jew who resisted to death.

Lanterns were carried before and behind the column of soldiers, and the tribune walked along the flanks of his men, making certain that they had the proper bearing. He marched them west along the roads and turned left at the small crossroads gate outside of which was the small hill that the Jews called Golgotha, which is to say, the skull.

They moved south along the hill to the right of the Tyropoeon Valley and down between Pontius Pilate's headquarters and the palace of Herod Antipas. The men kept a smart pace, the swinging lanterns causing their bare legs to dance in black on the pavement. Their orders were to report to the residence of **the high priest** so **Judas** could lead them to **the culprit**.

Caiaphas and **the Jewish Temple guard** had been waiting in the huge courtyard adjoining the lavish homes of both **Caiaphas** and **Annas**. When the daughter of **Annas** married **Caiaphas** she had suggested that their home be built next to that of her father, and that the two be made one with a common entrance. **The Temple guard** had waited so long for the Roman soldiers to arrive that, in impatience, **Caiaphas** had sent a messenger to Fort Antonia. On the way the courier had seen the soldiers and hurried back to inform **the high priest**. At the news, **Caiaphas** forgot **his** irritation with the laggard behavior of the Romans and once more questioned **Judas** for probable flaws in **his** story. **The high priest** knew that if **Jesus** was not found on this night, the Romans would mock **him** and news of the failure would spread all over Judea from Fortress Antonia by morning. **He** had to find **the Nazarene**, and **he** had to take **Him** into custody this very night.

Caiaphas summoned **Judas** once again to hear **his** plan. Changing **his** mind, **Judas** said that **he** doubted **Yeshua** and **His** band would go as far as Bethany tonight because of the late hour. Now that **he** had time to think about it, **Judas** said, there were two places **Jesus** might go if **He** were not in the Upper Room. The first would be the Temple, whose massive gates were opened after midnight. And the other was an olive press at the foot of the Mount of Olives. It worried **Caiaphas** that **Judas** kept changing **his** story. Who was playing whom?

The Temple guards had also been waiting for some time and had been given **their** orders. **They** had only to wait for the Romans, who would lend authority to the proceedings.

Annas never came out on **his** porch that night to ask about **the Temple guard** who stood murmuring and swinging **their** clubs in boredom. It was not necessary for **him** to come out. In **his** wisdom **Annas** had probably suggested soliciting the help of **Pilate**. As the one-time head of the Great Sanhedrin, there was little going on in **Jerusalem** that **he** did not know about, and even less that a dutiful son-in-law would not bring to **his** attention.

Annas knew that the Upper Room was only about two streets from **his** home, and a few of **his** servants could have easily taken **the Nazarene** at any time that evening. The extra precautions, like the use of **Pilate** and **his** soldiers, were because **Annas** wanted no scandal to remain after this night in the gossip of the Pharisees. **He** had told **his** son-in-law **Caiaphas** to follow the legalities of the matter down to the very jot and tittle. Let no one say **they** were out for revenge when **they** killed this **charlatan**.

Once **the Nazarene** was arrested, the next move would be to send the servants out at once to summon the Great Sanhedrin for an immediate session in the home of **Caiaphas**. The Sadducees believed it was legal to **call** the session even though their own self-governing laws said a man could not be tried for a crime in the dark. Perhaps the members of the Jewish Supreme Court could use the time before dawn in questioning this **man** about the Oral Law and how **He** had broken it. If so - since **He** posed as **the Messiah** - **He** might even be brash enough to expose **His** foolishness. If not, witnesses would be needed. **Caiaphas** knew this, and **he** expected **Judas**, because of **his** earlier protest, might need to be forced into compliance. In the event that witnesses could not be found, **Caiaphas** had arranged for the testimony of a few **Temple guards** who had heard **Jesus** blaspheme.

It would be interesting to know more about the meeting between **Caiaphas** and **Pilate** at the twin gates of the praetorium (see **Kk**). However, there is no record of it. But what *is* known is that Roman soldiers were sent to **Caiaphas** to support the raiding party. **Pilate** had charge of all the Romans in Palestine - and **he** disliked the Jews. Consequently, it is reasonable to believe that **he** would not send Roman soldiers to assist **Caiaphas** in a Jewish religious problem unless **he** could use it to **his** advantage down the road.

Pilate understood Jewish law as well as **he** understood the laws of the Empire. **He** must have known that the penalty for blasphemy was death, and **he** knew that the sentence could not be carried out unless, and until, **he** confirmed it. **He** also knew that **Yeshua** had become a chronic and growing problem to the Sadducees. And this must have pleased **him** very much.

The Roman governor had no interest in **Jesus**; no more, let us say, than **he** would have had if a scorpion lodged in the high priest's pants. **He** was on the side of the scorpion until it had finished its work; after that, **Pontius Pilate** would grind it under his heel. If, for example, the Jews arrested and condemned **Christ**, the governor would be happy, in his judicial capacity, to set **the man** free if it would confound **Annas** and his son-in-law **Caiaphas**.

One thing was certain. **Pilate** would not have sent his soldiers to assist in the arrest if **Caiaphas** had been foolish enough to send a low-level deputy to ask for them. The tactful thing, the high priest knew, was a personal audience. This was distasteful to **Caiaphas**, but in going **he** would gain two advantages. First, **he** would enlist the Romans in the arrest, and, thus, in the eyes of the multitudes that followed **Messiah**, make it appear to be a Roman matter rather than a plot by the Sadducees. And secondly, by enlisting Roman aide now, the high priest hoped to influence **Pontius Pilate** to agree with the death sentence that was sure to follow. Rome could hardly participate in the arrest and then concede that a cohort of five hundred Roman soldiers had hauled an innocent man in before the governor.¹⁴⁷⁰

First, the Living Word prayed for Himself (Yochanan 17:1-5): After **Jesus** told His apostles these things (Chapters 14-16), **He** looked toward heaven and prayed. In Chapter 17 the veil is drawn back and we are admitted with our great High Priest into the Most Holy Place. It is perhaps, the most remarkable portion of the most remarkable book in the world. **Father**, **He** said loudly, **the hour has come**. **Messiah** could approach **God** in prayer because of their **Father-Son** relationship. **The hour** had been appointed before the beginning of time; it was the destiny to which **Yeshua** had been born (Daniel 7:13-14). However, **Christ** didn't focus on the suffering **He** was about to endure. Instead, **He** called attention to **God's** plan and **the glory the Father** would receive. **He** prayed: **Glorify Your Son** (by raising **Him** from the dead), **that Your Son may glorify You** (Yochanan 17:1).

Yeshua's words: **For You granted Him authority over all people**, indicate that **Christ's** prayer request was in accordance with **the Father's** plan. **The Father** has ordained the rule of **the Son** over the earth. Psalm 2:7-8 declares: **I will proclaim the LORD's decree: He said to Me, "You are My Son. Today I have become Your Father. Ask Me, and I will make the nations Your inheritance, the ends of the earth Your possession."** **Messiah** was **granted that authority** so that **He might give eternal life to all those** who believe in **Him** (John 17:2). Believers are **a gift from the Father to the Son: And this is the will of Him**

who sent Me, that I shall lose none of all those He has given Me, but raise them up at the last day (Yochanan 6:39). This is a very strong eternal security passage (see Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer).

Now this is eternal life: that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent (John 17:3). Jesus defined eternal life as having a relationship with ADONAI and His Son, the Messiah, Jesus. The word know (*ginosko*) comes from a Greek term meaning *to understand* rather than merely to perceive or recognize. The term implies an exchange of ideas and values with complete familiarity. Here the word know is used here exactly as it is used in Jeremiah 31:33, in the passage promising Isra'el a New Covenant: And no longer will each one teach his neighbor and his brother, "Know ADONAI," for they will all know Me (see my commentary on Jeremiah Ep - The Days are Coming, declares the LORD, When I Will Make a New Covenant with the People of Isra'el). Eternal life is not only a long life, but also an abundant life. Christ said: The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (Yochanan 10:10). And we can only enjoy this eternal life when we fulfill our created purpose: to glorify ADONAI and to enjoy Him fully.

Messiah reflected the truth of His identity, recalling how He had come from glory to reflect the glory of the Father on earth. Having completed His task, He looked forward to His return to glory. I have brought You glory on earth by finishing the work You gave Me to do (John 17:4). That is to say, however, that Messiah rid Himself of His humanity; rather, He returned to heaven in a glorified, resurrected body - the very kind believers will receive when we are resurrected when the Lord returns.

These words reflect a deep longing for heaven. We too easily forget that while Yeshua became a man and placed Himself in the world through a miraculous birth, He is not of this world. We tend to see everything from an earthly perspective, so we recall His earthly life, appreciate His greatness as a man, and imagine what a joyful experience it must have been to work, live and minister with Him. But think of what He left behind when He left heaven to enter the world in Bethlehem and to depart the world less than ten miles away in Tziyon - to be born under such humbling circumstances and to suffer such a humiliating death.¹⁴⁷¹ And now, Father, glorify Me in your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began (Yochanan 17:5).