

The Miracles of Jesus  
Miracle # 31

**"Jesus Restores Malchus's Ear"**

(Matt 26:51-56, Mk 14:46-47, Lk 22:50-51, Jn 18: 3-11)

This is Jesus' last miracle before his death, performed on the night of his capture and trial, just hours before his crucifixion.

Jesus has just finished a time of intense prayer and has returned to his disciples when

all four gospel's relate that a mob led by **Judas** arrives in the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. In an attempt to defend Jesus one of the disciples grabs up a sword and slashes off the ear of a man in the crowd.

***The Background of the Miracle***

The scene is pretty ludicrous a multitude of armed men to take one seemingly defense-less man.

Matt 26:51-56

"And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. (52) But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. (53) Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? (54) How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?" (55) In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. (56) But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled."

"Put your Sword in it's Place" (v. 52)

Jesus gave three reasons for his command to "put away" the sword.

First, "All who take the sword will perish by the sword." (v. 52).

Individuals have down through the years used this passage to argue for pacifism or non-resistance. This is not an endorsement of pacifism but rather the acknowledgement that those who commit acts of violence for personal ends will face the punishment by the civil authorities. Jesus is not talking about self-defense or the defense of ones family or about fighting in

the armed forces of one's nation. He is referring to violently taking justice into one's own hands.

It does, however, say that God will never use **force** to carry forward the plan of redemption. As John MacArthur says, "The church has never made advances by physical warfare and every time it has tried, the cause of Christ has been severely harmed. There are no holy wars. Every war fought in the name of Christ has been utterly unholy, contradicting and undermining everything His Word teaches." [John MacArthur. MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Matt 24-28) (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989) p. 189]

We might take just a moment to note that this is completely opposite of what Moslems are taught. In spite of the fact that there is a media blitz trying to convince Americans that Islam is not a **violent** religion this is just not the facts. Their holy book (the Koran) promises sensual joys and pleasures in heaven for all Moslems who die in battle in defense of their faith. In fact it is the only way for a Moslem to **guarantee** themselves a place in heaven. The Islamic religion has spread across the world primarily by the sword.

Secondly, Jesus says this use of force is **unnecessary**. Jesus did not need the physical protection of the disciples, as we will discover in the next section.

Third, Jesus says that which is transpiring "**must happen thus**" (v. 54) that **Scripture** may be fulfilled. The whole of Scripture indicate that the purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry of redemption "**must**" lead to the cross.

"That the Scripture....might be fulfilled." (v. 54)

The events of that night also are a reminder that Jesus was not **forced** upon the cross. What he did, He did willingly. He was not overpowered, as He poignantly points out, "**...do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?**" (v. 53). Some seem to think that he went to the cross because he had only twelve weak disciples to defend him, of whom only two had swords (Lk 22:38). However, we must not forget that He could have had "**twelve legions of angels**" (a Roman legion was about **6,000** men, Jesus says he have had **72,000** angels at his disposal) to protect Him had He asked for them. If a single angel could destroy an army of 185,000 Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35) what could 72,000 angels do?

Only John tells that this man's name was Malchus (John 18:10) and that it was **Peter** who did the resisting. If John had not told us that it was I think that we could probably have guessed, who else beside old impetuous Peter? As they began to bind Jesus' hands it was more than Peter could stand and he strikes out, likely it was high priest servant who was leading in this matter. He (Malchus) as "the" servant of the high priest,

was an important official in his own right and someone whom John evidently knew by sight. It is ironic that this last miracle is performed for an **enemy** who has come to make sure that Jesus is arrested.

### John 18:3-11

"Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. (4) Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" (5) They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. (6) Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. (7) Then He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." (8) Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way," (9) that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none." (10) Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. (11) So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"

John's account tells us that Jesus was not at all defenseless. A part of the miracle on this night was that in a sudden outpouring of his power through the **spoken word**, his enemies were knocked to the ground (Jn 18:6).

### **The Elements of the Miracle** (Lk 22:50-51)

Of the four gospel accounts only Luke the physician gives us an account of this miracle, how Jesus put forth his hand and touched the man's ear and miraculously healed him (vv. 50-51). "And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. (51) But Jesus answered and said, "Permit even this." And He touched his ear and healed him."

Good old Peter was no doubt aiming for his head, but fortunately he missed his target and only the man's ear (or at least a part of it) was cut off.

In this final miracle before his crucifixion he not only showed compassion and forgiveness to a enemy, he protected Peter and the other disciples from the retribution that would have surely come. But perhaps even more important it showed Jesus' complete **submission** to the will of the Father. Only moments earlier in the garden Jesus had prayed, "**Father if it be possible let this cup to pass from me!**" (Lk. 22:42). Yet now according to John's account (18:11) Jesus told Peter to return his sword to its sheath saying, "Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"

Jesus was confronted with a choice, the sword or the cup and he chose the cup. What choice will we make? Shall we take the sword, claiming our rights and defend ourselves against those that wrong us? Or, shall we follow the example of the Lord?

### **The Effect of the Miracle**

This last of Jesus' miracles is a wonderful example extending **forgiveness** to those who had done us wrong.

We do not know whether that Malchus ever came to faith in Christ or not, but I imagine that there was always something thought-provoking about his right ear. Every time he thought of that night he thought of what might have been had not Jesus have had compassion on him.

I also believe that Peter never forgot the lesson he learned that night. In 1 Peter 2:20-23 he writes, "For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. (21) For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: (22) "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; (23) who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously"