

**Women's Bible Study – Fall 2011**  
**Who Do You Say I AM? November 30, 2011**  
***He Is The Savior Of The World***  
**John 18:5-6**  
**Jann Wright**



## Sarah's Snow Globe

My youngest daughter, Sarah, collects snow globes. These have been her passion since she was a toddler fascinated by falling snow in little glass spheres. Over the years she has received many as gifts and bought a few herself from unusual places.

She has snow globes from Hawaii, Australia, Paris, and Normandy. She has angels, snowmen, and penguins under glass. She even has a snow globe depicting a ride on a Roller Coaster with her dad and sisters. I don't do Roller Coasters.

She also has an extensive Christmas collection. My favorite from this category is this lovely decorated evergreen tree, just the perfect picture of gold and green, traditional ornaments, even the gold trumpets and a star on top. However, the reason I particularly like this snow globe is when you turn it around you see an empty tomb, a cross, and a crown. All of this is encased in a glass sphere that is three inches in diameter. Christmas and Easter all gathered in one place.

That is our visual for this lecture. We are in the middle of the Christmas Season. Thanksgiving is behind us, Christmas is 3 1/2 weeks away. The sanctuary is being decorated, Christmas music is on the radio and Christmas gifts are being purchased and wrapped.

Easter is months beyond the yet to come snowstorms and subzero temperatures. Yet, we come to Bible Study, open our Bibles and we have the Cross, a vivid reminder of the life of the baby in the manger. For a Christian, Christmas and Easter are always linked, one is incomprehensible apart from the other.

## Context

Our focal passage is John 18:5. It is only one verse. However, you know that I can't teach anything without placing it first into a context. We learned last week that Jesus began his ministry when he was 30 years old. Only about three years have elapsed. Looking back, it is early 1st Century A.D.

It is Passover on the Jewish Calendar. There were three major feasts that all Jewish men were expected to journey to Jerusalem to celebrate: the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the combined Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread.<sup>1</sup> Passover was the commemoration of the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt. Let's think back to our elementary Sunday School Classes. Remember the Jews or the Israelites as they were called were enslaved to the Egyptians. God sends Moses to be the leader of the people and to tell Pharaoh to let his people go. Pharaoh refuses and God sends 10 plagues.

The tenth and final plague was the death of the firstborn in every Egyptian household. An angel would go throughout the kingdom and strike the firstborn son. Exodus 11:6 says, "There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt—worse than there has ever been or ever will be again". However, in the midst of this terrible destruction an incredible provision was revealed that had tremendous implications for the Israelites living in Egypt then, for the Jews living at the time of Christ, and for us right now.

Listen as I read excerpts from Exodus Chapter 12. <sup>3</sup>Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household . . . <sup>5</sup>The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, . . . <sup>6</sup>Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. <sup>7</sup>Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs . . .

<sup>12</sup>On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both men and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup>The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt".

This was the event they were celebrating, The Passover. The blood on the doorframes was God's provision for covering their sins and saving them from judgment. Fast forward thousands of years, the Jews in the time of Jesus are celebrating the Passover.

Jesus the ultimate lamb of God is preparing to be sacrificed. His blood will be shed, but instead of being a sign, or symbol, or foreshadowing that the lamb's blood was in the Old Testament, this would be the reality behind those previous symbols. Jesus will shed his blood and those who choose to accept it as their covering will be saved from God's judgment.

That is the Biblical Historical Context, let's look at the geographic context. The focal point is Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives, and the Kidron Valley. If we had Google Earth

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<sup>1</sup> Tenney, Merrill C. General Editor. Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary. Zondervan. Grand Rapids, MI . 1963. page 280.

open we could zoom right down to the Garden of Gethsemane which is where the primary scene takes place.

The last few weeks have been difficult ones in the lives of Jesus and his disciples. In the chapters leading up to this one the crowd has accused Jesus of being demon possessed. The chief priests and the Pharisees sent the temple guards to arrest Jesus, but they returned empty handed saying, "No one ever spoke the way this man does". Jesus confronts the Jews numerous times holding them accountable for their lack of belief and willingness to side with evil. He heals the blind man on the Sabbath. He raises Lazarus from the dead.

In John 5 we get a sense of the atmosphere: <sup>16</sup>So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. <sup>17</sup>Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too am working." <sup>18</sup>For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

The hostilities continued to escalated and within hours will reach their ultimate conclusion. We will read from John 18 and then discuss the specific thoughts, actions, and words of Jesus in this dark time. If you have your Bibles please turn to John 18:1.

## Passage: John 18

<sup>1</sup>When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it. <sup>2</sup>Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. <sup>3</sup>So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

<sup>4</sup>Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?" <sup>5</sup>"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) <sup>6</sup>When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup>Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they said. <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go." <sup>9</sup>This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

<sup>10</sup>Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) <sup>11</sup>Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

<sup>12</sup>Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him <sup>13</sup>and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. <sup>14</sup>Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

## His Steps

Let's begin our discussion with His Steps. Jesus had finished the last supper with his disciples. After words of instruction, prayer and a hymn they leave the upper room. They go through the gate and down the steep Kidron Valley.<sup>2</sup> The Valley is a riverbed that remains dry most of the year, except during the winter rains.<sup>3</sup>

It is Passover. The Passover lambs are slaughtered in the temple and their blood is poured on the altar as an offering to God. The number of lambs was huge. In fact, 30 years later, a census was taken, and the number was 256,000, just over a quarter of a million.<sup>4</sup> From the altar there was channel down to the Kidron Brook, and through that channel the blood was drained away. With that many lambs the Brook must have been red with blood.

When Jesus crossed over that brook, the visual sight must have pierced him. His blood would be poured out as a sacrifice for the sins of the World. His steps were planned and purposeful as he walked to the Garden.

## His Thoughts

In the Garden, we see His Thoughts. If you are new to Bible Study you may wonder, isn't that a leap to talk about what someone is thinking. The Bible is a precious book and in it we are given access to very private moments. One of those moments is the conversation between Jesus and His Father. John doesn't provide us with these details

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<sup>2</sup> Barclay, William. The Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John Volume 2. The Westminster Press. Philadelphia. 1975. page 221.

<sup>3</sup> Burge, Gary M. The NIV Application Commentary: John. Zondervan. Grand Rapids, MI. 2000. page 491.

<sup>4</sup> Barclay, William. The Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John Volume 2. The Westminster Press. Philadelphia. 1975. page 221.

so we will turn to the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 26, beginning in Verse 36 to read them.

<sup>36</sup>Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." <sup>37</sup>He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. <sup>38</sup>Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

<sup>39</sup>Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." <sup>40</sup>Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. <sup>41</sup>"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." <sup>42</sup>He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

And the physician writer Luke adds this detail in his gospel. <sup>43</sup>An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. <sup>44</sup>And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. (Luke 22:43, 44)

The last time we gathered for Bible Study our topic was Son of God and Son of Man. Jesus was fully God and fully Man. We see this clearly in the Garden. Jesus is wrestling with His Father about the task that is before Him. He must take on himself all the sins of the world that have ever been committed and ever will be committed. He will bear the wrath of God and the punishment for all those sins. The Father will turn away from His Son. The prospect of all of that brings Jesus great sorrow. He is so overcome that his capillaries begin to break as blood falls like sweat.

He knows what will happen. He wrestles with the Father's will, asking if there is any other way. Yet in all of this He continues with a resolute mind and firm steps.

## His Accusers

He goes out to meet His accusers and aren't they an assorted bunch? They come with a massive display of force. There are chief priests and Pharisees, we assume they are accompanying the temple police. They also come with a band of Roman Soldiers. The Greek word used to describe them is speira. It can have three meanings. It is the word for a Roman cohort which had 600 men.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes, more rarely it was used

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<sup>5</sup>Whitacre, Rodney A. The IVP New Testament Commentary Series: John. InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL. 1999. page 425.

for a detachment of soldiers made up of 200 men.<sup>6</sup> Even if we take the smallest number from the definition it is still a large group to arrest one unarmed man accompanied by 12 rather ordinary followers.

They are heavily equipped with torches, lanterns, and weapons. The torches and lanterns are interesting accompaniments because Passover occurred during Harvest Season and there would have been a full moon. You may have noticed this in our own skies in the last few weeks. The area would have been well lit even in the evening. One Commentator theorizes that perhaps the accusers expected to have to search for Jesus in trees or caves. Note that the Prince of Peace and the Light of the World is confronted by men bearing torches and weapons. Jesus meets them first, and speaks first.

## His Words

I have been fascinated by His words for years. Let's reread the conversation. <sup>4</sup>Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?" <sup>5</sup>"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said . . . <sup>6</sup>When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

The original Greek does not have the word "he" on the end of His statement.<sup>7</sup> It is simply "I AM". This should grab our attention immediately because we have been studying this phrase, "I AM" for weeks.

But "I AM" reached far back beyond this early first century. Let's go back to around 1447 B.C., the time of Moses. When God was calling Moses to a position of leadership to bring his people out from their slavery in Egypt he got his attention through a burning bush in the desert. A burning bush that was not consumed by the fire. Let's listen in to their conversation recorded in Exodus 3.

God says, <sup>10</sup>So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." <sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" <sup>12</sup> And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." <sup>13</sup>Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" <sup>14</sup>God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

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<sup>6</sup> Barclay, William. The Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John Volume 2. The Westminster Press. Philadelphia. 1975. page 222.

<sup>7</sup> Boice, James Montgomery. The Gospel of John: Volume 5: Triumph through Tragedy John 18-21. Baker Books. Grand Rapids, MI. 1999. page 1379

I AM is a description of God woven through the Bible and plainly articulated in the passages we have been studying in the Gospel of John.

I AM the Bread of Life  
I AM the Light of the World  
I AM the Good Shepherd  
I AM the Vine

I AM the Resurrection and the Life  
I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Jesus is all of these things. We have studied all of these dimensions of his deity as we have looked at his life. He is God. He plainly communicated this truth to the people.

John 8:

<sup>52</sup>At this they exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. <sup>53</sup>Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

<sup>54</sup>Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. <sup>55</sup>Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word.

<sup>56</sup>Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." <sup>57</sup>"You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" <sup>58</sup>"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" <sup>59</sup>At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

He is telling them that he is God, for no one else can exist eternally. I AM was a claim to deity. That is why they are so angry and try to stone him. The name and description I AM was well known and steeped in Jewish history.

Now Jesus tells them again. When Jesus answers the soldiers' question, with "I AM" notice their response. They draw back and fall to the ground. It is as though all that meaning and history and power has been wrapped up into that one phrase and is then unleashed on the accusers. For a moment the slightest glimmer of his holiness and majesty is revealed. In response the soldiers fall to the ground. It gives us a perspective on Philippians 2:10-11 <sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

## His Mercy

Even in this moment we see His Mercy. He could have obliterated his accusers, but he holds back. Peter doesn't. He takes His sword and cuts off the High Priest's Servant's Ear. He was probably aiming for his head and missed. The Servant is in the company

of his accusers and yet Jesus grants him mercy. He touched the Servant's Ear and healed him.

Then Jesus makes this astonishing statement in Matthew 26. <sup>52</sup>"Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. <sup>53</sup>Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

Angels are very powerful. A single one killed all the first born in the land of Egypt. A single angel killed 70,000 people during the time of King David with a plague in the land and he had his hand outstretched to destroy Jerusalem until the Lord intervened and stopped him. A legion in the Roman Army was about six thousand men.<sup>8</sup> So 12 legions would have been 72,000 angels rushing to the aid of Jesus. That is power beyond comprehension. Jesus has the power to escape the Cross. However in obedience to His Father and in His great mercy, He chooses to die for the sins of an ungrateful world.

## His Grace

Finally, we see His Grace. He extends undeserved favor to His disciples. He commands the soldiers to let them go and surprisingly or perhaps not so surprisingly his armed accusers obey.

## Who do you say I am?

One of my first devotional books as a teenager was this one called Today is Mine by Leroy Brownlow. Beth Moore had yet to write her first Bible Study and Anne Graham Lotz was not teaching on a national scale. You couldn't download a podcast of John Piper or anyone else for that matter. There must have been other studies available, but as a teenager in a small rural Kentucky town, I didn't know about them. So this was my place to begin a daily commitment to Bible Study and prayer.

There is one entry that I still remember from all those years ago. I have searched and searched this book for it, and I can't find it, so I confess it may not even be in here, but I am going to paraphrase it as I remember it.

The setting is a museum filled with priceless works of art. A young man is strolling through the paintings as an elderly janitor goes about his work. The young man

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<sup>8</sup> Nelson Study Bible. New King James Version. Nelson Publishers. page 1627.

approaches a masterpiece enjoyed and revered for centuries and scoffs, "Well, that is not very impressive." The elderly man standing within earshot enters into the conversation. With years of wisdom and a gentle spirit he says, "The time has passed for critical evaluation of the masterpieces. The masterpieces now evaluate those who gaze on them."

You see the young man was not a very careful researcher of the piece he was reviewing. The years of history and careful examination by others had deemed this a painting a masterpiece. The young man with his cursory criticism had revealed more about himself than the artwork he judged.

So it is with us as we reach this our final study in this series, Who Do You Say I AM? Through the weeks we have carefully studied who Jesus is from his own words, from the thread that runs continually through the Bible, from his actions, and from the well documented evidence that has been gathered through the ages.

Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is the Savior of the World. Jesus came into this world, walked the land of Jerusalem, and laid down his life as a ransom for many. You must now make a choice about who he is. Like the evaluation of the masterpiece, your choice will not change who Jesus is and His future; but it will change everything about who you are and your future. His invitation to Come is still open. His invitation to Mercy and Grace is still open. He laid down His life for you.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:10-11)

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