

John 18:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Analysis

Judas then, having received a band of men (σπεῖραν, speiran)—a Roman cohort, numbering 300-600 soldiers, not merely temple guards. The synoptics mention only temple officers; John's eyewitness account reveals the staggering military force deployed to arrest an unarmed rabbi. This speiran typically guarded the Fortress Antonia, suggesting Pilate's involvement before the trial.

With lanterns and torches (φανῶν καὶ λαμπάδων)—an ironic detail: they brought artificial lights to arrest the Light of the World (John 8:12). Though Passover occurred at full moon, Judas feared Jesus might hide in Gethsemane's olive groves. Yet Christ, who hid nothing, voluntarily stepped forward (v. 4). The darkness they brought betrayed their own spiritual blindness, unable to recognize the true Light standing before them.

Historical Context

The arrest occurred during Passover week, circa AD 30-33, in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. Roman cohorts normally remained at the Antonia Fortress unless civil unrest threatened. Their presence indicates the Sanhedrin convinced Pilate that Jesus posed a political threat, framing His messianic claims as sedition against Rome.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Why might God allow overwhelming force to be used against His own Son, when one word could have stopped them (Matthew 26:53)?
2. How does the detail of 'lanterns and torches' illuminate your understanding of spiritual blindness in those who reject Christ?

Interlinear Text

ο	οὖν	Ἰούδας	λαβὼν	τὴν	σπεῖραν	καὶ	ἐκ	τῶν
G3588	then	Judas	having received	G3588	a band	and	from	G3588
G3767		G2455	G2983		G4686	G2532	G1537	
ἀρχιερέων	καὶ	Φαρισαίων	ὑπηρέτας	ἔρχεται	ἐκεῖ	μετὰ		
the chief priests	and	Pharisees	officers	cometh	thither	with		
G749	G2532	G5330	G5257	G2064	G1563	G3326		
φανῶν	καὶ	λαμπάδων	καὶ	ὅπλων				
lanterns	and	torches	and	weapons				
G5322	G2532	G2985	G2532	G3696				

Additional Cross-References

John 18:12 (Parallel theme): Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,

Acts 1:16 (Parallel theme): Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

