

John 18:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Analysis

As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he (ἐγώ εἰμι, egō eimi)—When Jesus spoke the divine name, the arresting cohort **went backward, and fell to the ground**. This is not mere stumbling but a demonstration of divine power: Jesus speaks egō eimi ("I AM," echoing Exodus 3:14), and armed soldiers collapse helpless before Him.

John emphasizes that Christ's arrest was voluntary, not forced. He who could flatten a Roman cohort with a word chose to lay down His life (10:18). The physical prostration foreshadows Philippians 2:10—every knee shall bow. Even His enemies' bodies confess His deity before their hearts deny it.

Historical Context

John alone records this detail. A Roman cohort (σπεῖρα, speira) numbered 600 soldiers, plus temple guards. The Kidron valley setting, at night, with torches and weapons, shows overwhelming force—yet they fall powerless. This demonstrates that Jesus was not a victim but the sovereign Lord orchestrating His own sacrifice according to divine decree (Acts 2:23).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's voluntary surrender to death, despite His power to resist, demonstrate the nature of true love and sacrifice?
2. What does the soldiers' physical response to 'I AM' reveal about Christ's true identity, even when His followers doubted?

Interlinear Text

ὥς	οὖν	εἶπεν	αὐτοῖς	ὅτι	Ἐγώ	εἰμι	ἀπῆλθον
As soon	then	as he had said	unto them	G3754	I	am	he they went
G5613	G3767	G2036	G846		G1473	G1510	G565
εἰς	τὰ	ὀπίσω	καὶ	ἔπεσον	χαμαί		
backward	G3588	G3694	and	fell	to the ground		
G1519			G2532	G4098	G5476		

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 27:2 (Parallel theme): When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.