

# John 18:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

## Analysis

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**"I have told you that I am he"** (εἶπον ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι/eipon hymin hoti egō eimi)—Jesus reiterates His self-identification with divine authority, using the covenant name again. Then He issues a command with kingly authority: **"let these go their way"** (ἀφετε τούτους ὑπάγειν/aphete toutous hypagein). The verb ἀφίημι (aphiēmi) means "release, let go, forgive, send away"—the same word used for forgiving sins and dismissing debts. Jesus, though surrounded by hostile forces, commands His arresters as if He, not they, holds authority.

The imperative mood makes this a command, not a request. Even in arrest, Jesus exercises protective lordship over His disciples. The conditional clause **"if therefore ye seek me"** (εἰ οὖν ἐμὲ ζητεῖτε/ei oun eme zēteite) creates logical necessity—their quarrel is with Him alone, not His followers. This recalls ancient warfare customs where combatants focused on enemy leaders, sparing subordinates if the leader surrendered.

This protective command reveals Christ's high priestly intercession in action (John 17:12, Hebrews 7:25). He shields His people from judgment by offering Himself in their place—the very heart of substitutionary atonement. The disciples deserved arrest as His followers, but Jesus interposes Himself, securing their release by His surrender.

## Historical Context

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Roman crucifixion typically involved executing a leader and key followers to crush movements completely. Jesus's insistence on His disciples' release was legally and militarily unusual—rebels' associates were normally arrested. Yet the arresting party complies, perhaps still shaken by the power display in verse 6, or simply confused by Jesus's cooperative yet commanding demeanor. This moment fulfilled Jesus's prayer in the upper room hours earlier (John 17:12): "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." For John's persecuted first-century readers, this provided assurance that Christ protects His own even through apparent defeat.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How does Jesus's command to release His disciples demonstrate substitutionary atonement?
2. What does Christ's protective authority during His arrest teach about His intercession for believers today?
3. In what ways does this verse answer fears about losing salvation or being snatched from Christ's hand?

## Interlinear Text

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ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς Εἰπον ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι· εἰ  
answered G3588 Jesus I have told you that I am he if  
G611 G2424 G2036 G5213 G3754 G1473 G1510 G1487

οὖν ἐμὲ ζητεῖτε ἄφετε τούτους ὑπάγειν·  
therefore me ye seek let these go their way  
G3767 G1691 G2212 G863 G5128 G5217

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