

# 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"** (ἄφετε 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	Εἶπον	ὕμῖν	ὅτι	ἐγώ	εἰμι·	εἰ
<b>answered</b>	G3588	<b>Jesus</b>	<b>I have told</b>	<b>you</b>	<b>that</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>am</b>	<b>he if</b>
G611		G2424	G2036	G5213	G3754	G1473	G1510	G1487
οὖν	ἐμὲ	ζητεῖτε	ἄφετε	τούτους	ὑπάγειν·			
<b>therefore</b>	<b>me</b>	<b>ye seek</b>	<b>let</b>	<b>these</b>	<b>go their way</b>			
G3767	G1691	G2212	G863	G5128	G5217			

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