

Who Was the Man Spoken of in Mark 14:51-52?

by Heath Rogers

We received a question concerning the identity of the man spoken of in Mark 14:51-52. These verses follow the account of the Lord's arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus had been praying while his disciples slept. He woke them as Judas was approaching with a mob to arrest him. Peter drew his sword and began to fight, but Jesus stopped him. When the disciples saw that their Lord was surrendering to the mob, they all forsook him and fled. Then, Mark adds the verses that are in question:

"Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked."

Who was this young man? No one knows for sure. All four gospels speak of the Lord's arrest, but Mark is the only one who speaks of this young man, and he gives us no clue to his identity. The following are some suggestions that have been offered.

He was a servant from the house where Jesus and the apostles had eaten the Passover. It is supposed that Judas first led the mob back to the house where he had left the Lord and the apostles. When he didn't find them there, he went to the garden. Seeing the mob, the servant's curiosity was aroused, and he followed them to the garden.

He was a resident of the neighborhood near the garden, awakened by the noise of the mob. Some have been more specific, speculating that he was the owner of the garden, probably living somewhere on the grounds.

Believe it or not, a very popular explanation is that he was the author. Some have suggested that, since this account is unique to the Gospel of Mark, that Mark is talking about himself.

These suggestions may be interesting, but they are just theories, speculations and opinions. We need to be content with the fact that we do not know who this man was. **This is just one of many questions to which the Bible does not give us an answer.** While it is important that we search the Word of God (Acts 17:11), it is dangerous to keep searching and demanding answers that God has not provided. The Bible clearly states that there are some things that we will not know. "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). Why are some things kept a secret from man? Because these things are not necessary for us to know in order to keep God's will. We have all that we need. If we fail to appreciate this fact, our search for the "secret things" can cause us to bring things into the Bible that don't belong there – thus adding to the Word of God (Deut. 4:2, Rev. 22:18-19).

With that being said, I believe there is some benefit to this account. While we don't know the identity of this young man, he helps us to see that the arrest of Jesus was a very tense and dangerous situation. The mob that came in search of Jesus was described as a great multitude, made up of troops and officers armed with swords and clubs (Mark 14:43, John 18:3). This was not a gang of curious townfolk. It was an organized military

operation, carried out with the authority of the chief priests. The enemies of Jesus had failed to take him into custody before. They were not about to fail this time! If a curious bystander was apprehended, and fled from the scene naked after wrestling himself free from his clothing, we can certainly understand why all the disciples would have forsaken Jesus, and why Peter would have followed him "at a distance" (Mark 14:54).

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