

The Lord Knew from Prophecy about His Execution, Isa 53:12; Matt 20:18–19; Jesus Drinks the Cup on the Cross; James and John Are Not Qualified to Do So; the Arrest of Jesus, John 18:3, 10

16. The Lord was not concerned over the prospect of physical death, He knew about it from the prophecy in:

Isaiah 53:12 - I will allot Him [**Messiah**] a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong [**escrow blessings**]; because He poured out Himself to death [**physical**], and was numbered with the transgressors [**the criminals beside Him on Golgotha**]; yet He bore the sins of the many [**spiritual death for the entire human race**], and interceded for the transgressors.

17. We also know He understood His physical death and accepted it from these comments:

Matthew 20:18 - “Behold we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death,

v. 19 - and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up.”

18. Although resigned to the certainty of His physical death, in Gethsemane the Lord was fixated on the battle He was about to confront. His intense concentration is indicated by Luke’s description in:

Luke 22:44 - Being in agony [**ἀγωνία (agōnia)**] He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

19. This is in the midst of the context of Jesus’ prayers to let the cup pass from him. The word translated “agony” is **ἀγωνία (agōnia)** which is a hapax legomenon, i.e., this is the only occurrence of the word in the New Testament.
20. The translation “agony” is problematic since it implies anxiety from mental strain or stress. *Anxiety* is defined by Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary as:

Anxiety: painful or apprehensive uneasiness of mind usually over an impending or anticipated ill. An abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physiological signs (as sweating, tension, and increased pulse), by doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat and self-doubt about one’s capacity to cope with it.”

21. This definition implies accompanying mental-attitude sins and several lexicons and dictionaries use the words *fear* and *anxiety* to define the word.
22. But the Lord cannot engage in any level of sinning and still be qualified to be our substitutionary sacrifice on the cross.
23. The dilemma is resolved by the following analysis of *agōnia*:

ἀγωνία: If this word can sometimes denote “conflict,” originally it means “inner tension” or “anxiety,” and most strictly it indicates the “supreme concentration of powers” in face of imminent decisions or disasters.

It is in this sense that ἀγωνία must be understood in Luke 22:44. This is not fear of death, but concern for victory in face of the approaching decisive battle on which the fate of the world depends.¹

24. These passages indicate that the Lord was well aware of the challenges put before Him. Functioning in His true humanity it is the Lord's desire to avoid the engagement with the cup of the cross.
25. His request to the Father is that He might be somehow able to avoid drinking the cup of humanity's sins and their judgment.
26. To drink of that cup will be a real baptism: Jesus, the perfect Man would be identified with and influenced by the sins of the entire human race. Our sins would be poured out on Him. During their time of judgment, He will be separated from fellowship with the Father, and He will be identified with every sin ever committed which will influence His status quo by imposing spiritual death.
27. As believers saved by the work of Christ on the cross, we are overwhelmed with gratitude that our Lord chose to drink of that cup and be baptized into our sins so that we might have eternal life by faith alone in Him and His work.
28. Ignorant of the meaning of the cup, James and John assert that they are ready to take it on. John is probably the smartest of the eleven apostles but on this occasion he shows his ignorance. Both John and James respond to the Lord's challenge to drink the cup of the cross with the assertion, "We are able" (Matthew 20:22b).
29. The Lord drank the cup of human sins on the cross and therefore actuated salvation for all. The disciples will be able to appropriate what Christ does, but it will be impossible for them to participate.
30. The Gospel of John does not record the Lord's Gethsemane prayers. The first scene John reports following the Lord's prayers in the garden is His betrayal and arrest.

John 18:3 - Judas, having received the Roman cohort [σπείρα (speira): One-tenth of a Legion or 600 Roman soldiers] and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees [ὑπηρέτης (hupēretēs): Roman-trained Jewish guards under the authority of the Sanhedrin and assigned to the temple], came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

31. During the process of the arrest, Peter undertakes a one-man assault against the entire group. His victim was neither a Roman soldier nor a temple guard but rather one of Caiaphas's servants:

John 18:10 - Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and stuck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus.

v. 19 - So Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"

¹ Ethelbert Stauffer, "ἀγωνία," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 1:140.

32. Peter did not understand the essential act for salvation. In some instances, the sword is an appropriate response to circumstances; here it is not.
33. Salvation requires a qualified substitute to resolve the sin problem of the human race. Jesus is that substitute and therefore the arrest is part of the prophesied process that ends at the cross.
34. The Lord commands Peter to sheath his sword and goes on to inform him of the reason, "The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"
35. A cup is a drinking vessel whose contents form the basis for biblical analogies.
36. In this case the analogy references the sins of the world imputed to Jesus on the cross. The "cup analogy" is used to teach numerous doctrines in the Bible.