

## Malchus

### *Mat. 26:51-54*

**26:51** And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck **a servant of the high priest's**, and smote off his ear. **26:52** Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. **26:53** Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? **26:54** But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

### *Mark 14:47*

**14:47** And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote **a servant of the high priest**, and cut off his ear.

### *Luke 22:49-51*

**22:49** When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? **22:50** And one of them smote **the servant of the high priest**, and cut off his right ear. **22:51** And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

### *John 18:10-12*

**18:10** Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote **the high priest's servant**, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was **Malchus**. **18:11** Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? **18:12** Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,

### the high priest's neglected servant

Peter's poor swordmanship is well known, but little attention is paid to the man who had his right ear cut off by the zealous but misguided disciple. Should Peter get all the attention—negative though it be—while Malchus is overlooked? The answer is no for at least two reasons.

First, in Luke's account, the Lord himself paid special attention to the high priest's servant by healing him completely. (See Luke 22:51.)

Second, in John's account the servant is named. (See John 18:10.) Insignificant servants and slaves are usually not named in the Bible. So John probably had some special reason or reasons for telling us that the servant's name was Malchus. Moreover, a relative of the servant is mentioned soon after, in John 18:26 as well.

A commonly held theory is that Malchus is named by John because he later became a believer. While it is impossible to prove this, some good points can and will be made in favor of this conjecture and in favor of looking at Malchus in a more positive light than usual. That said, Malchus was clearly part of a team with evil intent when he helped arrest Jesus.

## negatives

Malchus is no more a hero in the Gospels than the high priest for whom he worked. What he did was wrong, and, more importantly, he was on the wrong side. He was on the weaker side and the side that would lose in the end (B-4). Jesus is alive, but the high priest is dead.

Peter's actions were wrong in light of God's plan for the Messiah to die as Jesus explained in Matthew 26:52-54. But this does not prove that there was no just reason humanly speaking for Peter to have tried to defend Jesus from the evil intent of the high priests (A-3). (See Luke 22:49-50.)

Some speculate that Malchus later became a believer because his name is mentioned in John's account. (See lines A-5, D-3, D-5, and D-7.) But is there absolute proof that he truly believed? No, there is not. Perhaps he is named in John for some other reason (D-4).

If Peter had cut off someone else's ear, Malchus probably would not be mentioned in the Gospels at all. Moreover, the main focus in all four accounts is on Jesus and Peter. So, at best, Malchus is only a third-rate character. No wonder little is written about him, and he remains unnamed in the Synoptic Gospels.

*Mark the points below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).*

<b>A</b>	( ) <b>Malchus' actions were wrong.</b>
A-1	( ) He helped arrest Jesus.
A-2	( ) He acted at night (Luke 22:53).
A-3	( ) Peter had a good reason to strike him.
A-4	( ) He should have refused to help arrest the Messiah.
A-5	( ) There is nothing to indicate that he ever believed in Jesus.
A-6	( ) It does not say that he thanked Jesus for healing him (Lk. 22:51).
<b>B</b>	( ) <b>Malchus was on the wrong side.</b>
B-1	( ) He worked for the high priest.
B-2	( ) He followed Judas (John 18:2-3).
B-3	( ) The high priest apparently trusted him.
B-4	( ) He was not on God's side (John 18:4-6).
B-5	( ) He represented the high priest (John 18:10).
B-6	( ) He was probably near the front of the arrest mob.
B-7	( ) His relative in John 18:26 was also on the wrong side.

## positives

Peter did not cut off someone else's ear. He stuck Malchus. So who are we to say that such was just an accident?! Nothing in the Lord's arrest was accidental. Peter probably did not know Malchus by name, but John knew him somehow. Best of all, God knew him completely.

The healing of Malchus' ear fits well in the third Gospel, for only Dr. Luke records this miracle and some others. (The healing of the man with dropsy in chapter 14 likewise is only in Luke.) This too is not accidental. Some wish that the Gospels were more alike, but each one is by design, somewhat unique.

Most lines in the C section below are focused on the relationship between the healing of Malchus and the nature of Luke's Gospel, while many of the lines in the D section seek to associate Malchus being named by John with the emphasis in the fourth Gospel on believing.

In judging the worksheet lines, be careful about the exact wording. For instance, there is an important difference between saying that something may show a certain thing is true (D-4) and declaring that it proves that the same is true (C-2, D-3, D-7). *Several lines below are either incorrect or only partly correct.*

Mark the points below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

<b>C</b>	( ) <b>The healing of Malchus was important.</b>
C-1	( ) It is an example of God mercy.
C-2	( ) It proves that Luke was written by a doctor.
C-3	( ) It shows some important things about Jesus.
C-4	( ) Malchus was the last person healed in Luke's Gospel.
C-5	( ) The healing should have been recorded in all the Gospels.
C-6	( ) The healing may have helped save Peter's life (John 18:9, 26).
<b>D</b>	( ) <b>The naming of Malchus was important.</b>
D-1	( ) Slaves are rarely named in the Bible.
D-2	( ) It was part of John's focus on individuals.
D-3	( ) It proves that Malchus later became a believer.
D-4	( ) It may show that John knew Malchus (John 18:15, 26).
D-5	( ) Acts 2:41 shows that Malchus joined the Jerusalem church.
D-6	( ) All four Gospel writers should have included Malchus' name.
D-7	( ) It proves that Malchus was an important man in the early church.

conclusions

worksheet answers

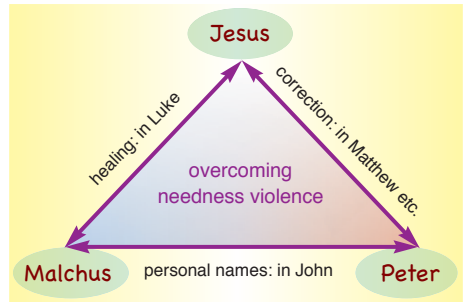
It is wrong to say that there is nothing to indicate that Malchus later came to believe in Jesus (A-5). But it is also incorrect to say that the naming of the high priest's servant by John proves that Malchus eventually became a believer (D-3) and part of the early church (D-5, D-7). The truth is somewhere in between. The naming of Malchus by John was probably part of the apostle's stress on individuals (D-2) and maybe indicates that the high priest's servant was saved later.

There are two clear indications that John knew Malchus personally (D-4). These are naming him in 18:10 and mentioning his relative in 18:26. In addition, from 18:15 we know that John had easy access to the high priest's house. Thus the truth about Jesus may have been somewhat known among the high priest's servants even before the Lord healed Malchus.

Lines A-5, C-2, D-3, and D-7 are incorrect or at best only partly correct because their points are too strongly stated. Line C-6 may be correct, but it is clearly wrong to insist the Gospels be exactly alike (C-5, D-6). Finally, opinions are divided about the correctness of Line A-3.

So what. . . ?

As usual, Mark is brief and simply reports Peter's violence without naming him. In Matthew, Jesus corrects his overly zealous disciple at length for his action and lack of biblical understanding. (There is also some correction in John's Gospel.) Luke alone shows that Jesus reversed the result of Peter's attack, and John alone mentions Peter and Malchus by name, making the scene and the connections more personal. The diagram below illustrates this interaction.



The needless violence of Peter (and the other disciples, Luke 22:49) toward Malchus was overcome through:

- 1.) correction in Matthew (and John),
- 2.) physical healing in Luke, and
- 3.) personal connections in John.

We do not know if Malchus later connected with Jesus by faith or not. But we do know that violence is common when right relationships are missing.

applications

Apply the points which you believe are most important or seem most useful.

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