

To Fulfill What Was Spoken

Matthew 26 pt. 2 - The Last Supper and Gethsemane

The time of this section of scripture is the actual night before the cross. Jesus had just been “anointed for burial” by Mary of Bethany at a dinner party held in His honor. From the moment Jesus came on the scene and was baptized by John the Baptist 3 ½ years ago, He had been counting the days toward this moment. In fact, I believe that He timed His entire life leading up to this night, where He would be arrested, sentenced to death and crucified at Passover of His 33rd year. Now the time has come!

The Last Supper:

Matthew 26:17-19 “On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

18 He replied, “Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.’” 19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.”

Jesus is very eager to share the Passover seder with them and, much like He did with the donkey for His triumphal Entry, He had already pre-arranged where it will take place and who will provide the Upper Room. Luke’s gospel gives a few more details;

Luke 22:10-13 “He replied, “As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, ¹¹ and say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ ¹² He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there.” ¹³ They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.”

This was it! “The Last Seder, which many call “The Last Supper”;

Matthew 26:20 “When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve.”

“Reclining” is the tradition posture for the Passover Seder. It is meant to be eaten on couches or floor pillows, like middle east wealthy Sultans, not upright on rigid chairs. He was with “The Twelve” apostles, including Judas Iscariot. Bear in mind, these twelve men and Jesus, were all Jewish and celebrated the Passover seder every year on this date in Spring, (the 15th of Nissan). They knew this Biblical Feast, which celebrates the release of the Israeli slaves in Egypt at the time of Moses.

Matthew 26:21-22 “And while they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” 22 They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?”

We all know who He is talking about, Judas. But at that moment, the Apostles did not know who it was. Judas must have been so sneaky and deceptive, that they didn’t immediately point to him. Instead they asked; “Is it I Lord?” “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?”

Matthew 26:23-25 “Jesus replied, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 24 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”25 Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?” Jesus answered, “You have said so.”

This verse brings up a lot of theological debate; Did Judas have a choice?

When you read John’s Gospel, you see that Judas didn’t wholeheartedly follow Jesus in his heart like the rest of the Apostles. He had been stealing. He had been pursuing his own selfish agenda. He was close to Jesus physically, but his heart was far from Him. That’s what makes this passage so real for us. You can be near Jesus, hear His words, even serve in His circle, and still not give Him your whole heart. The cross was God’s plan, but Judas’ actions were his choice.

This is something that is hard for us to understand because unlike God, we are bound by time. We learn the future as it happens. If we “know” something ahead of time, it’s because we made it happen or forced it to happen. But God is not bound by time the way we are. He sees the beginning and the end at once. His knowing is not the same as our controlling. He is “sovereign”, meaning He has authority over all things, and He is “omniscient”, meaning He has knowledge of all things (past, present, and future), yet in His authority He has granted mankind free will to reap blessing or bear the consequences of their decisions.

THE BREAD AND THE WINE: This is the part of the seder where our Sacrament of Communion comes from.

Matthew 26:26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

Remember, this is the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” (matzah), so they were eating Matzot. The entire meal uses Matzot to eat, to dip, to break, and share. Matzoh is flat unleavened bread, symbolizing the bread made quickly when the Children of Israel were escaping Egypt in haste. (*Not like the puffy bread pictured in Leonardo da Vinci’s (1498) Last Supper painting*);



Matthew 26:27 “Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

In a traditional seder there are four cups of wine to drink throughout the meal. They each have a name and meaning;

1. Cup of Sanctification
2. Cup of Judgement
3. Cup of Redemption
4. Cup of Praise

The cup that Jesus gave them was #3, The Cup of Redemption when He said; This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

They may have been very alarmed at His words here, “this is my blood”, probably brought an eerie reverence to what is normally a relaxed enjoyable seder. He was imputing deep significance into the seder meal, so that from now on, each time they did it, they would reflect on His death on the cross. Paul writes:

1st Corinthians 11:25-26 “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”

Then Jesus makes one more statement about the finality of this moment;

Matthew 26:29 “I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

This is His way of reminding them that He is not going to be with them much longer.

Matthew 26:30 “When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” 🎵

It’s very likely that Jesus sang a lot during His time on earth, but It’s only mentioned specifically here in Matt 26:30. It’s traditional after a seder to sing Psalms 115-118 (The

Hillel”) – “Praise”. Which mean as they went out to the Mount of Olives, where He was about to be arrested, He sang songs like “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; His love endures forever.” (Psalm 118)

Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial

Matthew 26:31-35 “Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.”^[Zech. 13:7] 32 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.” 33 Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.” 34 “Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” 35 But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the other disciples said the same.”

We will see at the very end of this chapter that Peter does deny Jesus three times and “weeps bitterly”.

Matthew 26:36-38 “Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray. 37 He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

Gethsemane comes from the Hebrew/Aramaic “*Gat Shemanim*”, meaning “oil press.” It was an olive grove at the foot of the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem. You see here that Jesus was troubled and sorrowful. He said His “Soul” is overwhelmed to the point of death. Did you know that Jesus had a Soul? Of course He did if He was human. That Soul (mind/emotions) was overwhelmed with sorrow, anguish, and possibly even grief as He faced His final moments before being betrayed by his friend and arrested, denied by another friend and beaten, and then rejected by the very people He came to save and sent to a torturous death on the cross.

Interestingly Gethsemane means; “oil press,” Jesus was pressed beyond ordinary human strain. **Luke 22:44** tells us that in His anguish His sweat was “like drops of blood” falling to the ground. Even before a whip struck Him or a nail pierced Him, the suffering had already begun in surrender.

Matthew 26:39-41 “Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” 40 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. 41 “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. *The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*”

This statement “*The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*” shows that Jesus empathized with their weakness. They ‘wanted’ to stay awake and pray with Him, but they kept falling asleep.

Hebrews tells us;

Hebrews 4:15 “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”

This is a choice we all face. The spirit and flesh are in conflict with each other.

Galatians 5:17 “For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.”

We cannot just do whatever we “will” and let the flesh control or govern us. We must submit to God’s will, not our own.

Romans 8:6 “The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.”

Jesus Himself had to submit His human will to the Father’s divine will. This is why He prayed; “*My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.*” Or “*Not My will, but Your will be done!*”

Matthew 26:42-44 “He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.” 43 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. 44 So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.”

In this brief prayer we see the full humanity of Jesus — His emotions, His internal struggle, even “His will”, *which needed to be submitted to the Father, even though He was Jesus!* And yet in the same breath, we see His perfect obedience, even to death on the cross.

Matthew 26:45-46 “Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”
<>

The very next verse tells us... “While He was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.”

Jesus will now be arrested and sent to Caiaphas, to Pilate, to Herod, back to Pilate, and then to the Romans — to be mocked, beaten, flogged, and crucified!

How does this make you feel? I know if I were one of Jesus' apostles whom He asked to pray with Him in His deepest moment of anguish, I would have tried my best to stay awake. But very likely I would have fallen asleep as well, just like they did. Our flesh sometimes grows weary of resisting its own desires, and we cave in to temptation or compulsion.

But we know that we have the power of the Holy Spirit as our comforter, advocate, and power, so that when we are weak, He is strong. In those times we must focus on Jesus and run with endurance, and not grow weary and lose heart.

Hebrews 12:1-3 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

As we focus on the cross, and proclaim His death until He comes, let's Consider Him who endured such opposition, endured the cross, and humbled himself by becoming obedient to death. He is our pioneer, perfecter and our power. When we are weak, He is strong, in fact His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

Let us pray for his presence, peace, protection and power, to be made perfect in our weakness, as we say; “*Not My will, but Your will be done!*”

Keep our eyes fixed on Jesus...

Phil 2:6-11 “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”