

MATTHEW 26: 1 – 30

SHELTER IN THE SHADOW OF BETRAYAL

We have left the eschatological teachings of Jesus and now enter into a narrative that twists like a mystery novel or even a movie. We will move between Jesus speaking to His disciples and that of an evil plot to rid Jerusalem and even the world of the Messiah. Yes, there is plenty of intrigue in the Bible. And we will see it here today.

The long running battle between Jesus and the Jerusalem authorities, which ended with Him leaving the temple and declaring its fate now reaches its inevitable conclusion as their rejection of Jesus turns from words to deeds. What was predicted in 16:21 is now coming to pass.

The last supper is much more than a farewell meal. It provides the theological template within which the following events are to be understood.

There are three layers/ aspects of concentric circles that set the scene and three aspects are drawn from these circles.

- The outer layer: vv. 1-2; 17 – 19 – the approach of the Passover festival, which provides both the historical and theological context for what is to follow.
- Within that broader context we hear of the plotting of the priestly authorities against Jesus and their recruitment of Judas. (vv. 3 -5; 14 – 16)
- Within that context is the account of the symbolic anointing of Jesus' head with oil by a woman at Bethany. The devotion of this woman contrasts with the hostility of the priests and Judas, while the interpretation of her act prepares us (the readers) for the success of their plot. But all this is to be understood in the context of the Passover – the festival of God's deliverance and redemption of His people and the occasion of the covenant, which constituted Israel as the people of God.

1 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, that He said to His disciples, 2 “You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

After verses one and two there are no more extended teachings by Jesus, at least not prior to His resurrection.

Before we hear of the priests' plot against Jesus we hear Jesus Himself foretelling what is to come. The order of these verses thus tells us that Jesus will not be taken by surprise, but willingly accepts His fate. And therefore the free initiative of the priests in verses 3 -5 is to be understood within the context of an already determined divine plan. Understand that those opposing Jesus are not programmed to do what they do, but are acting according to their own will, though God knew what would happen from before the creation of the world.

“After two days...” probably means the day after tomorrow. I believe the meal Jesus had with His disciples actually took place a day before the real Passover. If you pay close attention to all we have written about this in all four Gospels, you can put this together – though we won't get into all that today.

3 Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, 4 and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. 5 But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.”

The High Priest at this time was Joseph Caiaphas. He held office from 18 – 36 AD. This meeting, held in Caiaphas' house, was a rather ad hoc one as the Sanhedrin, (explain) would not have held a formal meeting in such a way. We can see the anxiety and the urgency of the priests. They have to rid themselves of the one who will render them obsolete, but Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem was enough to make them scared of taking Him in public. Those who followed Him all the way from Galilee believed Him to be the Messiah, though many of them will turn on Him when He doesn't fulfill this office in the way they think He should.

6 And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, 7 a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table. 8 But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste? 9 For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor.”

10 But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. 11 For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. 12 For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial. 13 Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a

memorial to her.”

There are three main meanings to anointing one’s head with oil in the Bible. The first is that of anointing a king at his coronation. The second is that of anointing a body prior to wrapping it for burial. It was also done to a visitor/ friend after having arrived from a long journey. All three of these, in a sense, apply here in one manner or another.

But in verses 8 – 9, we see that the attitudes of the disciples are once again out of step with Jesus. Compare this with their attitudes towards the children who were brought to Jesus. Giving alms to the poor was always important, even more important during a festival. And I believe Jesus had just told them regarding the judgment and how these acts figured into that judgment was also on their minds. They certainly didn’t want to be considered “goats.”

Dt. 15:11 – “The poor will never cease from the land.”

In verses 14 – 16, the devotion of the woman is in stark contrast to the betrayal of one of Jesus’ inner circle. Her uncalculating generosity and Judas’ sordid opportunism and betrayal are opposite ends of the spectrum here.

- There will always be two different sides on this side of Heaven.

14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15 and said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. 16 So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

- Judas sold out His Messiah.
- 30 pieces of silver – (denarii) the price of a female servant. **(This number (30) is linked to Zech. 11: 4 -14 as the price of the “rejected shepherd.”)**
- This wasn’t much money. There was more to this betrayal than monetary gain. There was an ideology behind it.
- Jesus wasn’t the type of Messiah Judas wanted. Jesus is rejected and betrayed today for the same reasons.
- It was important for the priests to have an insider to betray Jesus. An insider would have information as to His movements and whereabouts so He could be arrested away from the crowds. It’s almost like a mob hit in this sense.

In verses 17 – 46 we have Jesus’ last hours with His disciples.

17 Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?”

18 And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, "The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples."'"

19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

20 When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. 21 Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."

22 And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?"

23 He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. 24 The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

25 Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" He said to him, "You have said it."

Jesus Institutes the Lord's Supper

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Ever since the calling of the fishermen, this has been the story not of Jesus alone, but of Jesus and His disciples. But this unity will soon be broken in verse 56, as they will abandon Him.

Jesus will be left alone in the hands of His enemies to go through the experience of rejection, suffering and death. But before He does so, there is one last opportunity to prepare them for what is coming and to help them understand what His own sacrifice is about and alert them to the danger they will face, as well as their own roles as deserters.

The context is that of the Passover meal, which was normally celebrated with family.

MT. 12: 46 - 50

46 While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. 47 Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You."

48 But He answered and said to the one who told Him, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” 49 And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”

Jesus is now initiating a new family – the family of God, the body of Christ!

However, the presence of a traitor has already cast a shadow over what is normally a festive occasion.

- The Passover and its significance to Israel.
- Death angel would pass over the house, sparing the first-born. This led to the exodus and Israel’s deliverance as a nation. The Messiah would also lead to deliverance and the establishment of a “new people,” a “new nation.”
- When judgment came down, either it fell on your family or you took shelter under the substitute, under the blood of the lamb. Israelite and Egyptian alike were subject to the judgment if the blood wasn’t applied to the doorframe.
- The Passover meal had four important points to it. At each distinct point the presider got up and explained the feast’s meaning. At each point a cup of wine was taken. **The four cups represented the four promises made by God in Exodus 6: 6 – 7. These promises were for rescue from Egypt, freedom from slavery, redemption by God’s divine power and a renewed relationship with God.**
- The third cup came when the meal was almost finished. The presider would use Dt. 26 to bless the elements: bread, herbs and the lamb. We read of Jesus taking the third cup.

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”

27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

Jesus repurposed the Passover meal. What He said here was not what was normally said. He now applies it to the new covenant. “This is my body.” This meant that this was the “bread of His affliction” – repurposing the words of Dt. 26. **“This is the bread of my affliction because I’m going to lead ultimate exodus and bring you the ultimate deliverance from bondage.”**

29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

This was a common way of making an oath. It was like signing a contract. This contract was ratified by cutting an animal in half and walking between the halves. (God and Abraham.)

27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

Jesus' words mean that there is a new covenant relationship between God and us. And the basis of this relationship is Jesus' own blood. When He states that He will not eat or drink again until He meets us in the kingdom, it means that He is unconditionally committed to us. He is saying, "I am going to bring you to the feast of the king."

Passover was eaten the night before God Israel from Egypt and now it was eaten the night before God redeemed the world from sin and death through the blood of Jesus.

Notice that there is no lamb mentioned at the meal. That is because Jesus was the lamb.

John 1:29

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

On the cross Jesus got what we deserved. The sin, guilt, and brokenness of the world fell upon Him. He loved us so much that He took divine judgment on himself so that we could be passed over, forever.

All love, all real, life-changing love is substitutionary sacrifice. You have never loved a broker person, you have never loved a guilty person, you have never loved a hurting person except through substitutionary sacrifice.

- Befriending the geeky kid at school. His geekiness is rubbing off on you. You're not so cool anymore. There is no way for you to diminish his isolation without entering into it yourself. Some of it has to fall on you.
- The forest fire in Yellowstone National Park.
- The mother bird and her babies. When the blaze arrived, the mother had remained steadfast instead of running. Because she had been willing to die, those under the cover of her wings lived.
- **Lk. 13: 34, 35**
- **34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not**

willing! 35 See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' "

Will you seek the shelter He has offered under His wings?