

## Matthew 24b-26 Chapter Study

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Outline for Matthew*

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#### IV. JESUS' LAST WEEK 21-27

##### *F. The Olivet Discourse 24-25*

1. Jesus foretells the temple's destruction 24:1-2
2. The sign of the end 24:3-31

In v. 3, the disciples had asked “What will be the sign of Your coming & the end of the age?”

It's important we grasp this because many students of this passage miss it. They hadn't asked for signs [plural] – but **THE SIGN** that marked Jesus' return.

Jesus began the answer by laying out the whole scope of history & how it would all move purposefully toward it's grand climax.

Then in v. 15, He answers their question & tells them *what sign* will mark His return as imminent.

#### 15 **“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand),**

→ & the question to us before we read any further is – do *we* who are reading understand?

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The disciples had asked for *the* sign that would alert them to Jesus' return.

A *sign* is something you *see*!

It's a concrete proof, something *tangible* to the physical senses.

And in *this* case, it's a sign to be *seen* with the eyes.

Jesus said that *the sign* that would announce His return was the appearance in the holy place of the abomination of desolation which had been spoken of by the prophet Daniel.

Matthew alerts his readers that if they don't know what this is about, they need to stop & get educated.

First of all, “the holy place” refers to just one thing – *the inner sanctum of the temple*.

So, something must be *seen* there that is so abominable it brings about utter destruction.

Daniel gives us much needed insight in ch. 9.

In vs. 24-27 the entire history of the Jewish people as a nation is laid out.

A timetable is provided; in it we learn some interesting things.

We read that Jerusalem & the temple will be destroyed, the Jewish people scattered.

But in the last days, in fact, in *the last 7 years* of the age, the temple will be rebuilt & a man will rise to power referred to as the antichrist.

He will forge a treaty with many nations that will provide a state of peace in which Israel will renew the daily sacrifices in their rebuilt temple.

But the antichrist will *revoke* his prior treaty, end the sacrifices & set up an image in the temple so abominable it provokes God to rain down the judgments we find spelled out in the Book of Revelation.

In Daniel 11 we read –

**30** He shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. **31** and forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.

To the disciples, an *abomination* was an especially offensive form of *idolatry*.

Idolatry was the sin that had resulted in Israel's being judged by God & exile to Babylon, & *the Jews of Jesus' day utterly abhorred idolatry*.

When the disciples heard Jesus mention *an abomination* that results in desolation, they would think of two things – an idol & Daniel's prophecy. Here Jesus makes it clear the abomination they'll see will stand in the temple holy place, & this will be so offensive to God it'll lead to immediate, overwhelming judgment.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, the Apostle Paul adds further insight on just *what* this abomination will be.

**3**[The Day of the Lord] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, **4**who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

The antichrist will enter the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, will call a halt to the worship being offered to God, & demand that all worship instead be offered to him *as god*.

Revelation 13 tells us that the antichrist's chief religious crony, the False Prophet, will make an *image* to the antichrist, will somehow animate it, & then demand that the world show religious veneration to it.

This image will probably be placed in the inner sanctum of the temple.

This is the gauntlet fallen man uses to slap the face of God, & God takes up the challenge by rocking the planet with wave after wave of judgment in the last half of the Tribulation period.

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Jesus says in v. 16, when you see the abomination of desolation -

**16** “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. **17** Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. **18** and let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. **19** But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! **20** and pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

The peace treaty the antichrist had forged 3½ years before will lie in ruins.  
By ending the daily sacrifices & demanding worship the eyes of the Jewish people will be opened and they will realize the antichrist is *not* their messiah – he’s a devil incarnate.  
Instead of worship, they will recoil in loathing, & this will so infuriate him, he will strike out at them with all his might, which will be considerable.  
So Jesus tells them – when you see these things take place in the temple – get out of town – **NOW!**  
Revelation 12 tells us the people of Israel will flee to a wilderness refuge the Lord will prepare for them.  
There they will remain, safe and secure, though the antichrist will send forth his forces to try and route them.  
Every attempt will fail because God will protect them.

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A question arises at this point – if Christians are raptured *before* the Tribulation begins, then they won’t be around to *see* the abomination of desolation & won’t need to flee – *so why this warning* – unless Christians *are* going through the Tribulation.

These words *aren’t* written *to the Church* – they’re written to Jesus’ followers, & specifically Jesus’ *Jewish* followers who come to faith *after* the rapture, during the Tribulation, who *will* live through all this.

You can be sure the NT scriptures will find a whole new audience among the Jewish people during the Tribulation period.

Even before they come to faith in Christ, they’ll be plowing through the pages of the Bible because of the ministry of the 2 witnesses & the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who will be preaching the gospel and leading many to faith in Christ.

When the eyes of the Jewish people are finally opened to the deceit of the antichrist, they will at the same time open to the truth that Jesus is the real deal.

Within 3½ years, the entire nation, at least what’s left of it, will call for Him to come & save them from the campaign of terror the antichrist has unleashed against them.

It is **THAT** invitation of the Nation that brings about the Second Coming.

**21 For then . . .**

When the abomination is set up in the temple.

**21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 and unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.**

While the entire last 7 years are called ‘the Tribulation’, the ‘**Great Tribulation**’ marks the last half when the judgments of God, provoked by the antichrist’s abominable claims, fall like hammer blows on earth.

The first half of the Tribulation will be a time of relative peace & prosperity as the antichrist’s mask remains firmly in place & he presents himself as the world’s savior.

Jesus makes it clear that the catastrophes that befall the planet during the last half

of the Tribulation will be so severe & widespread, that if there wasn't a time-limit to them, they would result in the death of all mankind.

God will bring an end to the judgments so that His *elect* will survive.

By *elect*, Jesus does *not* mean the Church.

The "elect" are simply those who in whatever age, are the focus of God's redemptive attention.

In the OT, the elect were Israel. In the NT, the elect comprise the Church.

But as Daniel 9 makes clear, God has one last period of 7 years set aside to deal specifically with the nation of Israel & the Jewish people.

That last 7 years is the Tribulation & Israel is the elect referred to here.

- 23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. 24 For false christs & false prophets will rise & show great signs & wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand. 26 "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes from the east & flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.**

The pressure that will be brought to bear on the Jewish people during the Tribulation to accept the antichrist as their Messiah will be fierce.

And since Spirit-filled Christians won't be here to resist him or oppose his claims, many will hear his great wisdom & see the wonders he performs & fall all over themselves in lauding him as their savior.

Jesus gives the warning – *don't believe it!*

He makes it clear – when He comes again, there will be no doubt it's Him.

He won't need front men to draw attention to Him.

He won't need a publicity agent when He comes or someone to set up a speaking tour.

When He comes, it will be as when lightning splits the sky – every eye will see, even those that are closed!

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Then Jesus says something that sounds awkward to us –

- 28 For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles [vultures] will be gathered together.**

This was an *idiom*, a figure of speech they would have easily understood but we find hard to connect to the context.

It's like our saying, "Where there's smoke, there's fire."

What Jesus is saying is that just as the corruption of death always brings down the vultures – so the moral & spiritual corruption of the last days will bring down the judgment of God.

This fallen, sin-sick Planet will one day find its rebirth in the consummation Christ brings. It's inevitable – nothing can stop it!

- 29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, & the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, & the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, & then all the tribes**

**of the earth will mourn, & they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power & great glory.**

When Jesus returns at the end of the Tribulation, the prophets tell us that dramatic changes will take place in *all creation*, not just on Earth. (Joel 2:10, Rev. 6:12-14, Isa. 34:4).

While the remnant of believers who survive will rejoice in His coming, those who've hated & opposed Him & have aligned themselves with the antichrist will weep & howl.

**31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, & they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.**

By the *elect* Jesus still means the Jews.

Trumpets were used in the ancient Israel for 3 main purposes;

- 1) To call the army to battle,
- 2) To announce the time of prayer & sacrifice in the temple,
- 3) To assemble the congregation.

That's the way it's used here – God will call the Jewish people to assemble from their homes all over the world into their Promised Land under His earthly rule as Messiah.

**3. Knowing the last generation 24:32-35**

**32 “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender & puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>33</sup> So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! <sup>34</sup> Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. <sup>35</sup> Heaven & earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.**

We covered these vs. in great depth 2 Sundays ago. If you weren't here – get a copy after study.

**4. Be ready 24:36-51**

**36 “But of that day & hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.**

On that Sunday, we showed how what Jesus was referring to here *has* to be the Rapture, & not the Second Coming, & that the Rapture must be 7 years *prior* to the Second Coming.

Just as there are two comings of Jesus, one in humility & one in glory, & the Jews missed the first because they were focusing only on the glorious coming as the conquering King – so the Second Coming has two phases;

*The first phase* is in secret, in the clouds, to take His bride to her wedding chamber where He will stay with her for 7 years.

*The second phase* is His glorious, visible return.

There's another reason why we can easily conclude that Jesus must be referring here to the Rapture – He said no one but the Father knows the day or hour!

Yet in Dan. 12:11 we read that *from* the day the antichrist causes the daily sacrifice to be stopped & the abomination of desolation is set up, there will

be 1,290 days & then Jesus comes!

So – what Jesus is referring to in v. 36 **CAN'T** be the Second Coming. The only thing that fits is the Rapture, which must take place 7 years *before* the Second coming.

**37 But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>38</sup> For as in the days before the flood, they were eating & drinking, marrying & giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> & did not know until the flood came & took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.**

Jesus says He will come in the Rapture when it's business as usual – which can't at all describe life on earth at the end of the Tribulation when He comes again.

**40 Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken & the other left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken & the other left. <sup>42</sup> Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched & not allowed his house to be broken into. <sup>44</sup> Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.**

Again, we covered this quite adequately 2 Sundays ago.

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Keeping on the same theme of living faithfully as the best way to be ready for the Lord's return, Jesus says -

**45 "Who then is a faithful & wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? <sup>46</sup> Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. <sup>47</sup> Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods.**

The best way to watch & be ready for the Lord's return is not to don a white ankle length robe & go stand on a hillside somewhere, or quit our jobs & devote ourselves to the study of eschatology, looking for signs of the coming of Christ in the fulfillment of prophecy by current events.

The best way to prepare is through diligence in life, in our stewardship of time, talent, & treasure; with the most important treasure being our *relationships* at home, at church, at work & at school.

Our daily life is the proving ground for our faith.

And our faithfulness in the things of *this life* translates directly into the opportunities we'll have in the Kingdom.

**48 But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' <sup>49</sup> & begins to beat *his* fellow servants, & to eat & drink with the drunkards, <sup>50</sup> the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* & at an hour that he is not aware of, <sup>51</sup> & will cut him in two & appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping & gnashing of teeth.**

A grim & sobering picture.

Reading this, some are troubled by the thought they could lose their salvation, for Jesus speaks of this man as a *servant*.

But notice in what 3 ways he behaved:

- 1) He cared nothing about the Return of Christ or God's will for him.  
Life was not about being faithful to the business God had called him to be occupied with. It was about what he wanted to do.
- 2) He abused his relations.
- 3) He gave himself to a life of sensual pleasure in company with others of like mind.

There's nothing in this man's life to indicate he's saved – nothing but a title he claims.

That's Jesus' point – a title, a label does not a true-disciple make.

Genuine believers love the return of Christ & live their lives in light of it.

## CHAPTER 25

For the rest of our study tonight, because we need to get through 2 more chapters, we will be covering the text in a much more summary fashion.

In vs. 36-51 of ch. 24, because He is coming again, Jesus main point was – “Be ready!”

He follows that up with two more parables whose point can be summed up as “Be Wise & Be Faithful.”

### 5. Be wise 25:1-13

**1** “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. **2** Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. **3** Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, **4** but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. **5** But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. **6** “And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ **7** Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. **8** And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ **9** But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ **10** And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. **11** “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ **12** But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ **13** “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

It's crucial we remember that a parable was meant to teach *one thing*, to communicate *one point*.

The point of this parable is this – because Jesus is coming at an unexpected moment, wisdom demands we be ready at all times!

In this story there are 10 young women who comprise a wedding party.

There were 3 phases to a Jewish wedding.

- 1) Engagement – arranged by the fathers of the couple.
- 2) Betrothal, which began when the couple made public promises to each other. The groom would then return to his father's house where he would build a room where he and his new wife would live. This took about a year.
- 3) Marriage - As construction drew to a close, word would be sent to the bride to get ready. Then, at any day, the groom would arrive and summon her to his house and carry her there where the wedding would take place.

As soon as the bride received notice that the groom's coming was close, she'd summon her friends who would comprise her wedding party and travel with her to the groom's place for the wedding.

The bride's friends traditionally kept oil lamps because the groom might arrive after dark or even before dawn, and they needed to be ready to go whenever he arrived.

In this story, some of the bride's friends foolishly ran out of oil.

When the groom came, they weren't ready, and were left behind.

Jesus' point here is that being in the wedding party does not make you a part of the wedding!

Don't be foolish & think that just because you go to church you're also a Christian.

Only one thing matters – do you believe in Jesus Christ? [expand]

## **6. Be faithful 25:14-30**

**14** *“For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. <sup>15</sup> And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. <sup>16</sup> Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. <sup>17</sup> And likewise he who *had received* two gained two more also. <sup>18</sup> But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. <sup>19</sup> After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> “So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ <sup>21</sup> His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ <sup>22</sup> He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ <sup>23</sup> His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ <sup>24</sup> “Then he who*

had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. <sup>25</sup> And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, *there* you have *what is yours*.' <sup>26</sup> "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. <sup>27</sup> So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. <sup>28</sup> So take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents. <sup>29</sup> 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. <sup>30</sup> And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

This reinforces the lesson Jesus had taught in 24:45-51.

The best way to prepare for the Rapture is to live faithfully right now.

God has given to each of us a measure of grace; that is, specific gifts, talents, time, & treasure.

He didn't deal them to us for us to squander or sit on.

He intends for us to use them –to develop them so that they produce something worthy of Him.

Those who are His genuine people *will* see themselves as stewards of the life He's given and *WILL* be faithful.

## **7. The judgment of the nations 25:31-46**

**31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.**

Jesus moves now from speaking about the Rapture to the Second coming.

**32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.**

The word "nations" is the general word used in the Bible for all non-Jews; it's usually translated as "Gentiles" and that's the way it's meant here.

You see, Jesus has already said that when He comes again, He will gather the Jews from all the places they are around the world and settle them in the Promised Land.

Once that's done, then He will set up His throne to decide who enters the Millennial Kingdom.

All will be gathered into one of two groups; called here, the sheep & the goats.

The sheep are those Gentiles who have come to faith during the Tribulation & have managed to survive to the end.

The goats are the rest; the Gentiles who have aligned themselves with the Antichrist.

**34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand,**

The sheep.

**'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: <sup>35</sup> for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'** <sup>37</sup> "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? <sup>39</sup> Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' <sup>40</sup> And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.'

There's a simple trait that will identify the Tribulation saints – they will comprise a spiritual family that will tenderly seek to take care of one another.

They will know that they are an embattled minority and will pull together for mutual support and survival.

Though they won't realize it – by ministering to one another, they are really rendering loving care for the Lord Himself for He indwells His people.

**41** "Then He will also say to those on the left hand,

The goats.

**'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: <sup>42</sup> for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'** <sup>44</sup> "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' <sup>45</sup> Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.' <sup>46</sup> And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The Tribulation period will see the total dissolving of all kindness, mercy, & compassion.

It will be a time of the worst brutality the world has ever known.

While the Tribulation saints will pull together as a family, unbelievers will grow cold & heartless.

They will take on the demonic nature that has come to characterize the age.

At the end of the Tribulation, the believers who survived will be allowed to enter the Millennium while the unbelievers will be condemned and sent to hades.

## **G. The Plot To Kill Jesus 26:1-16**

### **1. The warning 26:1-2**

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

There's a bit of debate among scholars over how many days the Passover was held at this time.

Moses set just one day for it, but by Jesus time, there were so many pilgrims who came to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast, they had to hold it on two days, just so they'd have enough time to sacrifice all the lambs.

The pilgrims celebrated on Thursday while the native Jerusalemites celebrated Passover on Friday.

Our best calculations put the Passover Jesus and the disciples observed at the Last Supper on Thursday. This would then permit Him to be crucified on Friday.

Jesus is probably referring to the Real Passover here, which was on Friday.

So that makes this either Tuesday or Wednesday.

In any case, Jesus makes it crystal clear that there are only a couple days left until He's betrayed and killed.

## **2. The plot 26:3-5**

**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, <sup>4</sup> and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. <sup>5</sup> But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people."**

It's become clear to the leaders of the Jews that Jesus poses a dangerous threat.

Everywhere they turn they hear the acclaim of the people talking about Jesus and promoting the idea He's the Messiah.

They know the danger there is that if there's a public uprising, the Romans will crush it mercilessly, and hold them responsible for failing to keep the populace in check. They will lose their positions.

The office of high priest of Israel was supposed to be a hereditary position, passed on from the high priest to his eldest son.

But the Romans had made the office into a puppet.

The current High priest, Caiaphas had been installed by the Romans when his father-in-law Annas had proven difficult to control.

So the Jewish leaders felt compelled to assassinate Jesus as quickly as possible.

But they couldn't just go out and do it publicly because that would inflame the huge crowd of common people.

And Messianic expectations were always highest at the Passover since it was a holiday which celebrated their deliverance from oppression.

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## **3. The anointing at Bethany 26:6-13**

We'll skip vs. 6-13 tonight because we covered them Sunday.

## **4. Judas' conspiracy 26:14-16**

**14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.**

Jesus' commendation of Mary's anointing Him with the precious perfume was the turning point for Judas.

A man who could be so financially inept as to allow such tragic waste was not

worthy of Judas' loyalty.  
It was obvious to Judas that what Mary had done was utter foolishness- but Jesus had rebuked him in front of the others for his criticism of her. Suddenly the last three years of his life, following Jesus all over the country were thrown into doubt – what was the point?  
Judas was a practical man – He'd thrown his lot in with Jesus because He showed promise as an aspiring Messiah.  
By grabbing a seat among the disciples, when Jesus ushered in the Kingdom, the gamble would more than pay off!  
But lately Jesus had been talking about dying and that didn't fit in to any of Judas' plans.  
Commending Mary's foolish act was the straw that broke the camels back on his part among the disciples.  
He'd taken a gamble on Jesus, and it had proven a bad investment.  
So why not cut his losses and try to salvage something out of the time he'd wasted?  
So he went to the leaders who he knew were conspiring to trap Jesus, and offered to turn Jesus over to them.

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Now, this is a little troubling – why would the leaders need Judas to do this?  
The answer is simple; they didn't have TV, movies, and the print media as we do today.

Jesus was a normal looking man who blended in to the crowd. There was nothing remarkable about his appearance.

When the temple police came to arrest Him, because they had no picture to refer to, they would need someone close to Him who could verify who the real Jesus was.

Judas offered his services – he would be the one to finger Jesus.

#### **H. The Last Supper 26:17-35**

**17** Now on the first *day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread* the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?” <sup>18</sup> 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.’**” ”

The Feast of Unleavened Bread lasts a week & begins with the Passover meal. Jesus had already made arrangements with someone in Jerusalem to host the Passover with the disciples.

When the disciples asked where they would eat, Jesus directed them to him with the password He'd already arranged with the owner of the house.

**19** So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover. <sup>20</sup> When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. <sup>21</sup> Now as they were eating, He said, “**Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.**” <sup>22</sup> And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, “Lord, is it I?” <sup>23</sup> He answered and said, “**He who dipped his hand**

**with Me in the dish will betray Me.** <sup>24</sup> **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.** <sup>25</sup> **Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, “Rabbi, is it I?” He said to him, “You have said it.”**

Judas knew he was the one – in fact Matthew uses an interesting phrase in v. 25 – He says that at that moment, Judas “was betraying Him.”

The plot to betray Jesus was unfolding at that very moment!

The temple police were gathering in the temple grounds at that moment.

In just a few more minutes, Judas will leave to go meet them & lead them to the Garden of Gethsemane where he will complete his act of betrayal.

Judas knew he was the guilty one, but each of the other disciples was asking if they were the one who would betray Him, Judas was obliged to ask as well, lest he *look* like the guilty one by his failure to ask.

While Jesus remained silent at each of the others disciple’s questions – He made it clear He knew Judas was the betrayer.

**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. <sup>28</sup> For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. <sup>29</sup> 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.”**

Bread & wine were a central part of the Passover meal, each of them being symbolic of the unique covenant God had made with the people of Israel.

Jesus now takes the bread & wine and lifts them as symbols to an even higher level; the bread is His body, the wine His blood.

Just as God had forged a covenant with the Jews through the original Passover – Jesus was now forging a new covenant out of the old.

He is the real Passover Lamb, His blood the real protection from the judgment of a Holy God.

Jesus tells them He will not take of the cup again until the consummation, when He is reunited with His people for eternity.

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

Singing hymns was a part of the Passover celebration.

It’s a wild thing to think of Jesus singing! What did *His* voice sound like?

The Mt. of Olives was a favorite place of Jesus’.

There was one particular place that He loved there – a little grove called “Oil Press” – Gethsemane.

At the base of the Mt. of Olives lies a small cave with abundant evidence that it was used as an olive press. This may very well be the location of Jesus’ retreat.

Wherever He went, it was familiar to Judas, because that’s where he led the mob to arrest Jesus.

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As they were walking out of the city toward the Mount . . .

**31 Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written:**

Then He quotes Zech 13:7 -

**‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’<sup>32</sup> But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”**

To be forewarned is to be fore-armed, the saying goes; but in this case, it didn’t help.

When the mob came to arrest Jesus, the disciples scattered like so many scared rabbits.

The reason Jesus told them this would happen was to let them know He knew ahead of time how they would desert Him & He wasn’t mad or upset with them.

They mustn’t think that when He rose from the dead the first thing He’d do would be to come after them and smite them for bailing on Him.

This talk of forsaking Jesus irked Peter, who thought himself above such cowardice.

**33 Peter answered and said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.”<sup>34</sup> Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”<sup>35</sup> Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And so said all the disciples.**

This will be our text for Sunday, so I’ll leave further comment till then.

**I. Gethsemane 26:36-56**

**1. Jesus prays 26:47-56**

**36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, “Sit here while I go and pray over there.”**

This place is often called the “garden” of Gethsemane.

It’s called that because while Matthew & Mark refer to it as Gethsemane, John says it was a *garden*.

Don’t think of this as a modern garden with neat rows of flowers and fountains and a white trellis with a vine growing on it.

The ancient garden was usually a few shade trees that were sectioned off by a fence and gate.

Land was too expensive in the city of Jerusalem to devote to gardens so the wealthy secured plots of land on the hillsides next to the City for their gardens.

The Mt. of Olives was the premier location for such gardens.

The wealthy would spend hours during the hot seasons of the year sitting under the shade of their trees.

Some grew fruit & olive trees in their garden.

Since Gethsemane means “oil-press” it was probably olives that were grown in this garden.

It seems Jesus had a wealthy friend in Jerusalem who'd given Him permission to use his garden as a place of retreat.

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When they arrived at Gethsemane, Jesus dropped the disciples off at one side and then moved further on to pray. With Him He took Peter, James, & John.

**37** And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. **38** Then He said to them, **“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”** **39** He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, **“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”** **40** Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, **“What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? **41** Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.”**

Critics ask, “How did Matthew know what Jesus prayed if Peter, James and John were snoozing?”

They didn't fall asleep the minute Jesus left! They overheard His prayer, which He agonized over again and again.

It was this repetition & the copious amount of wine they'd consumed at the Passover meal that combined to make them drowsy.

When Jesus returned to find them sleeping, He roused them and exhorted them to watchfulness in prayer.

Not only was He facing a sore trial, they were too and they needed to be prayed up for it.

**42** Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, **“O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.”**

What was the trial Jesus was so burdened by – what was the ordeal He faced?

First – there was an overwhelming physical ordeal to endure.

Truly, in the annals of history, few people have had to endure the pain Jesus endured during His passion.

He was blind-folded & beaten with both rods and fists.

Thorns were pressed into His scalp.

He was scourged with a whip.

His hair and beard were plucked out.

His garments that had dried to His wounds were torn off.

He was attached to a Roman cross and endured hours of agony as He hung there.

His side was pierced by a spear.

And this is to say nothing of the trial of having to carry the cross, without any sleep the night before, with no food or water.

Second – there was the shame of being treated this way publicly; of having to endure the taunts and false charges of little men who were driven by fear and petty jealousy.

Third – and most importantly, Jesus knew that when He was on the cross, there

would come that fateful moment when the sin of the entire human race for all history would be placed on Him,  
For that moment, as He became sin, fellowship between He and the Father would be broken. This was probably the thing Jesus was most burdened by – broken fellowship with the Father. No pain compared to that pain.

Jesus well knew this was the only way to redeem mankind from sin.

So He surrendered Himself to the divine plan.

**43** And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. **44** So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. **45** Then He came to His disciples and said to them, **“Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. **46** Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”**

## **2. The Betrayal & Arrest 26:47-56**

**47** And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people. **48** Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, **“Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him.”**

**49** Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, **“Greetings, Rabbi!”** and kissed Him. **50** But Jesus said to him, **“Friend, why have you come?”** Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him.

**51** And suddenly, one of those *who were* with Jesus

It was Peter -

stretched out *his* hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. **52** But Jesus said to him, **“Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. **53** Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? **54** How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?”**

Peter moved to make good on his earlier vow of loyalty.

When the mob came to arrest Jesus, he thought it was show-time and that Jesus would now be *forced* to make His move as the “Mighty Messiah!”

Peter had taken the lead in other situations like this and did so again.

He grabbed his sword and started flailing with it. All he did was take a chunk out of a servant’s ear.

Jesus checked Peter and said that this is not the way things would proceed.

If military might is what was needed, Jesus didn’t depend on Peter’s inept skill with a sword – He could call down 72,000 angels if need be.

**55** In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, **“Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. **56** But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be**

**fulfilled.” Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.**

Jesus laid bare the fear that marked the mob that came to arrest Him.

They’d come out armed to the teeth, ready for a battle – and His followers had just proven themselves ready to give them one.

If Jesus hadn’t rebuked Peter’s use of violence, the other disciples probably would have started swinging too.

When the disciples realized Jesus was not going to use this moment to finally reveal Himself as the Messiah and wasn’t going to call down 12 legions of angels—they freaked and fled.

Jesus might give Himself up, but not they!

#### **J. The Trial 26:57-75**

##### **1. Jesus before the Sanhedrin 26:57-68**

**57** And those who had laid hold of Jesus led *Him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

There are so many ways in which the trial of Jesus was an illegal affair.

In fact, the rulers broke the law so thoroughly, they ought to have been uniformly removed from their offices for gross negligence.

Such cases as this were to be held at the temple, not someone’s house.

A case like this had to be held during the day – this was held at night.

**58** But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest’s courtyard.

**And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end. <sup>59</sup>Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, <sup>60</sup>but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward <sup>61</sup>and said, “This *fellow* said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.’”**

The rulers wanted to executed Jesus, but in order to do so, they had to find Him guilty of a crime serious enough to warrant death.

The law of Moses required that in order for someone to be declared guilty of a capital crime there had to be a minimum of two witnesses whose testimonies agreed.

In Jesus’ case, they couldn’t find two people who told the same story.

Again, under the law of Moses, anyone caught bearing false testimony was supposed to suffer the punishment for the crime they were accusing another of, so each of these false witnesses against Jesus ought to have been dealt with harshly.

They weren’t because the rulers weren’t the least interested in justice; only in getting rid of Jesus.

Eventually, 2 witnesses came forward who said they’d heard Jesus say He could destroy the temple and rebuild it in 3 days.

That too was a lie – Jesus never said He could destroy the temple.

He said if the temple was destroyed, He could rebuild it in 3 days – and He wasn’t referring to the Jerusalem temple; He was referring to His own Body! He was speaking of the resurrection!

These 2 witnesses thought they had enough evidence to get Jesus condemned because anyone who spoke against the temple faced the stiffest penalties – but not execution!

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Finally, in frustration at the lack of credible witnesses who can charge Jesus with some capital crime, the high priest steps in . . .

**62** And the high priest arose and said to Him,

The high priest always sat to rule. The only time he rose was in the most solemn and severe of moments . . .

**The high priest arose and said to Him, “Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?”** <sup>63</sup> But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!”

Caiaphas was dumb-founded that Jesus refused to defend Himself or clarify His position & claims.

Even he knew that the charges were bogus and was flabbergasted Jesus did not answer them, showing them to be the silly things they were.

Caiaphas well knew of Jesus’ incredible wisdom and how to answer seemingly impossible dilemmas – why was He being silent now?

So he used his office as high priest, the highest official in the land, who had been authorities by God himself to rule.

Caiaphas put Jesus under a holy obligation to answer whether or not He was the Messiah—and Jesus did.

**64** Jesus said to him, “*It is as you said.*”

Which is a polite & respectful way of saying – “YES!”

**Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”**

Jesus couldn’t have made it any clearer – He is indeed the Messiah, and by saying Caiaphas would see Him sitting at the right hand of The Power, meaning God Almighty, He’s claiming nothing less than deity for Himself.

And that’s why . . .

**65** Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, “He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! <sup>66</sup> What do you think?” They answered and said, “He is deserving of death.” <sup>67</sup> Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck *Him* with the palms of their hands, <sup>68</sup> saying, “Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?”

There was no more need of witnesses simply because Jesus had uttered what they considered blasphemy – He claimed to be God! And they all heard it.

What they didn’t stop to consider was that in making the claim there was one of two possibilities:

- 1) He was committing blasphemy because he was just a man.
  - 2) He was God; and instead of mocking and beating Him, they ought to have been *worshipping* Him.
-

These men, who were THE judges of Israel were making a fatal error and they ought to have known better.

You see, in their own theology – they believed that the Messiah would be the Son of God, that He would be a divine person.

Look at v. 63 and the high priest's question -

**"I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!"**

So in their own theology they believed the Messiah would be the Son of God and the Son of Man –a mystical union of God and man.

When Jesus claimed to be the very thing their theology taught, they categorically rejected Him!

And what did they base their rejection on – evidence or prejudice?

All the evidence proved His claim. Their rejection was based solely on prejudice.

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Friends, we must be very careful that we do not fall in to the same trap as the priests here.

Does our theology translate into our actual choices.

Does our knowledge of God affect our decisions, or have we made a great mental divorce between what we say we believe about God and how we really live?

## **2. Peter denies Jesus 26:69-75**

This will be a part of what we look at Sunday, so we'll leave it till then.