

Lesson 23: Chapter 26 “Betrayal and Trial”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_26.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Matthew 25 contains three parables: the Ten Virgins, the Talents, and the Sheep and the Goats. These parables serve as a warning to believers to be prepared for Jesus's return, emphasizing the importance of vigilance, wise stewardship of God-given gifts, and compassionate service to others.

Memory Verse:

26: 41” Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Lesson Opener:

The introductory lesson on Aikido, a traditional Japanese form of martial arts, was an eye-opener. The teacher, told us that when faced with an attacker, our first response should be to “run away.” “Only if you can’t run away, then you fight,” he said seriously.

Run away? I was taken aback. Why was this highly skilled self-defense instructor telling us to run away from a fight? It seemed counterintuitive—until he explained that the best form of self-defense is to avoid fighting in the first place. Of course!

When several men came to arrest Jesus, Peter responded as some of us might have by drawing his sword to attack one of them. But Jesus told him to put it away, saying, “How then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?” (Matthew 26:54).

While a sense of justice is important, so is understanding God’s purpose and kingdom—an “upside-down” kingdom that calls us to love our enemies and return evil with kindness. It’s a stark contrast to how the world

might react, yet it's a response that God seeks to nurture in us. Jesus healed the ear of the man Peter had struck.

May we learn to respond to difficult situations as He did, always seeking peace and restoration as God provides what we need.

Lesson Goal:

Jesus remains faithful to us even when we are faithless, and salvation rests in His faithfulness, not our own strength.

Lesson Body: [It is a long chapter, read only the verses that are marked to be read and summarize the other sections]

The Plot to Kill Jesus (26:1-5)

Jesus Christ informed His disciples of His sufferings which were soon to take place at Jerusalem, lest they might be discouraged. It was on a Tuesday evening [the beginning of the Jewish Wednesday]. When Jesus mentioned "two days" in verse 2, He was referring to Friday.

The Feast of the Passover is sometimes called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Passover feast commemorated their liberation from Egypt through God's great miracles and the unleavened bread was a reminder of how they left that land in haste.

The chief priests and scribes sought to kill Jesus for a long time. Only now we see that they are not willing to wait much longer, wanting to kill Him before He grew more popular. While they looked down on the common people, they also feared them because they were not always easy to control. Because many of the common people believed in Jesus, they were afraid of the backlash if they just arrested Jesus publicly. Thus, they sought to capture Jesus in secret.

The Christian Tradition originated the fasting on Wednesdays because on this day Judas betrayed Christ and the Jews ordered His death. The fasting on Fridays is because on that day Jesus suffered death for our redemption.

The Anointing at Bethany (Read 26:6-13)

Jesus had likely healed Simon the leper before. Even though others may have avoided Simon even after healing, Jesus had valued him when he was sick and when he was healthy and went to his house.

Who was this lady pouring the perfume and how valuable was her gift?

This woman is probably Mary, Martha and Lazarus's sister.

The perfume she poured cost about 300 denarii. That is roughly what a well-paid worker would have made in an entire year. This was no small gift! We should give our very best to Christ – She did not hold back. This perfume was probably being saved for a very special event, maybe her wedding. And to her, this was the perfect event. Jesus was special. He was more important to her than anything else in her life and was worthy of this kingly gift.

She was scolded for her gift rather than praised. She didn't seem to care what other people thought but only cared what Jesus thought.

She was radical in her service to Christ – This lady went far above and beyond the call of duty to show her love to Christ. It seems illogical to “waste” such an amount of money on this anointing that would wear off in a short period of time. But actually, it is the most logical thing in the world.

She was happy that her brother was raised from the dead, so she came willingly with a thanksgiving offering. She came right on time to anoint Him before His death, if she was one day late, she would have missed this opportunity. Jesus commended her action and mentioned it was for His burial.

After His ascension, we are to offer our gifts to Him through caring for the poor.

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus (26:14-16)

Judas did not betray his divine Master out of fear, but out of greed and love of money. He saw more miracles than the commoner and heard much more of Jesus' teachings. And yet, finally he betrayed Jesus.

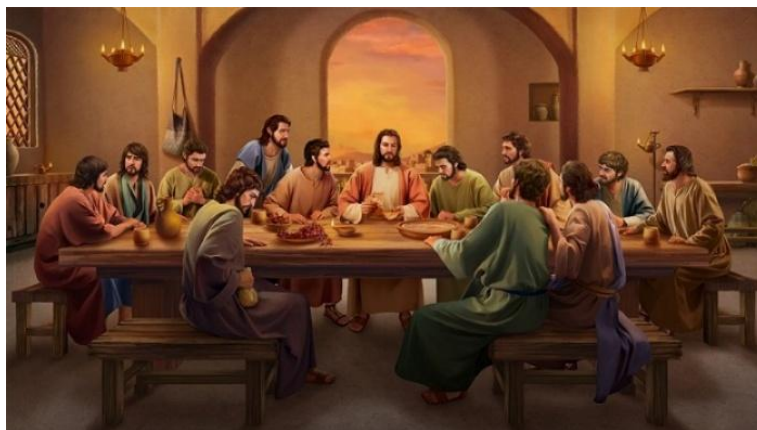
Christ ate the Paschal lamb after sunset. And when the Paschal supper was over, He consecrated the blessed Eucharist.

Judas had already betrayed him, Matthew 26:15, and he was now about to deliver Him into the hands of the chief priests, according to the agreement he had made with them.

Jesus Celebrates Passover with His Disciples (Read 26:17-25)

Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Passover meal in the upper room of St. Mark's house in Jerusalem. Jesus kept the name unknown to the rest of the disciples. As Father Theophlactius says, so that Judas might not know the place and so inform the chief priests and the scribes and thus arrest the Lord before offering His divine Passover.

What is surprising is that the Lord spoke of His betrayer in the midst of them all, without pointing at Judas. But when the Lord saw they were truly sorrowful, and each of them asked Him, (Matt 26:22) “Lord, is it I?” therefore He had to point at him.



Lest the disciples assume that what was about to happen to the Lord is out of weakness, He confirmed to them assumingly (Matt 26:24) “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.”

The Term” Son of Man” is a messianic title used exclusively to refer to Jesus Christ [Daniel 7:13, Matthew 8:20, Mark 2:10], it signifies both His humanity and His divinity, pointing to Jesus as the representative of mankind and the divine Messiah, that is why when Jesus mentioned this about Himself to the Jewish leaders once before, they were about to stone Him.

The Lord declared the misery that would befall Judas to assure them that what is being fulfilled, even though it is of God’s provision, yet what Judas was doing is not to be fulfilled without his own will. Judas was evil indeed, and God has used his wickedness to fulfill His divine issues.

Jesus told him to go ahead with his plan. Judas, therefore, left before the Lord's Supper was instituted.

Takeaway:

It is easy to look at Judas and think about what a foolish decision this was. But what about us? Every time we sin, we do a similar thing. Whenever we choose to satisfy our flesh, our lust, or our greed, we despise the commandments of God in return for short-term pleasure that we ourselves will despise as the guilt of our sin overcomes us. Do not make the same mistake Judas did. Do not knowingly reject any commands of God for short-term gratification.

Jesus Institutes the Lord’s Supper (Read 26:26-30)

He offered Himself a new Passover in place of the entire humanity. He declared the sacrifice of the cross was not fulfilled haphazardly. It was of His own will that He handed Himself over to the cross. He transformed the bread and the wine into His own flesh and blood, sanctified, a true sacrifice given for the remission of sins (Matt 26:28).

He has offered them to His church for us to obtain through generations, as confirmation to the continuance of the cross sacrifice. It is a live sacrifice, a unique and unequalled one, by means of which He grants the believers His sanctified flesh and blood as the mystery of their lives.

V29 → What is this ‘new’ that we will drink with Him in our Father’s kingdom other than our enjoyment in the partnership of the unity with God in the sacrifice of His Son in heavens on a new level. It is an extension of the current liturgy, but in a way that cannot be uttered!

Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial (26:31-35)

On His way to Mount Olive, He warned His disciples, and encouraged them, speaking all the time of the cross and the resurrection as well. He warned them that they would be scattered but He will meet them in Galilee after His resurrection.

By means of the cross, the enemy wished to strike the shepherd to scatter the flock. But the cross has been changed to resurrection, and the Lord will go ahead of us to Galilee.

St. Peter the apostle assumed he can stand next to the Lord and never doubt Him. He never realized his weakness. Jesus told him, he will deny Him and gave him a word of comfort that he will rise again.

The Prayer in the Garden (26:36-46)

Gethsemane is an Aramaic word meaning ‘an oil grinder’. The Lord, so willingly, is entering this grinder and that it was not possible for the disciples to enter with Him, so He told them to wait for Him a bit farther except for the three disciples.

The secret and reason of His sorrow is not because of the fear of physical suffering, but it was due to the weighty iniquity which the Lord could not bear or tolerate. But it was for this that He came, and in our place, He yielded in obedience to the Father, to carry the death of sin in Him.

No one is to understand that at this point Jesus is pleading like someone in need of strength or support from someone else. For, He Himself is God, the Father’s strength, able and authoritative. He rather did this to teach us, so we would cast away our carelessness at the time of temptation and be watchful.

Betrayal and Arrest in Gethsemane (26:47-56)

He had to accept the pain at the hands of one of His disciples, and through one kiss, His wound was as bitter as it could be since it was wrapped in false love.

The Lord gave Judas the last chance, even at the last moments when He was being arrested. He blamed him in gentle words (Matt 26:50) “Friend, why have you come?” [Jesus hoped Judas had changed his mind and not come]. With a kiss, Judas gave up His Master.

St. Peter, the apostle stretched out his hand, took his sword to strike Malchus, the servant of the chief priest, and he cut his ear (Matt 26:51). But the Lord commanded him to put his sword in its place, and He healed the servant’s ear. He did not want us to use the swords in resisting our enemies, but rather to use love and reverence, and thus win over those against us.

The eleven apostles who a little while before thought they never could forsake the Lord fled away as soon as He was seized. St. Mark left his clothes and ran. *How many Christians, when their attachment to Christ would lead them to danger, leave Him and flee!*

Jesus Faces the Sanhedrin (26:57-68)- Peter Denies Jesus, & Weeps Bitterly (Read 26:69-75)

He was accused of being a blasphemer for the words He said (Matt 26:61) “I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.” This was a false accusation, for He did not say so. He rather said (John 2:19) “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” He was actually speaking of the temple of His body (John 2:12). But as for them, they understood He was speaking of

Jerusalem's temple. As for the second aspect of blasphemy, it was because He said of Himself, He is Christ, the Son of God.

The chief priest was unable to bear the Lord's answer, so he tore his clothes. This was a sign of the tearing down of the Levite priesthood and its coming to an end. A new priesthood thus came up on the rites of Melchizedek.

St. John followed Jesus and entered the court while St. Peter waited outside then entered later. Many are like St. Peter, they "follow Him," but at a distance; far enough that it is difficult to discern that they are His followers.

St. Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. Then one servant girl came forth to accuse him of being with Jesus. But he denied it before all. As he was going out at the gateway, another maid saw him and accused him like the first one. But again, he denied it. After a while, those close by said his speech betrayed him. But he began to curse and swear he didn't know Him, at that moment the rooster crowed.

He wept in regret in bitter tears, when Jesus looked at him, because of his very serious sin.

Judas sinned, betrayed and sold the Lord because of greed. Afterward he was sorry, but it was the sorrow of this world that produced death, not repentance. He hanged himself.



Takeaways and Lesson Delivery Ideas:

Why did Peter deny Jesus?

1. Peter Was Overly Self-Confident

Peter's first step down was self-confidence. He was placing overconfidence in himself, directly contradicting what Jesus said, and almost boasting at the expense of others. [Mat 26:33]

It's never a good idea to boast about how much you love God. Rather, boast about how much He loves you. Peter was about to learn that pride goes before a fall.

2. Peter Didn't Pray When Told

Peter's second step down was falling asleep when he should have been doing as Jesus asked of him and the two other disciples. Jesus asked them to pray at the garden.

We must not forget that prayer is not only for petitioning to receive something but also for protection and preparation for something that's coming.

Jesus was preparing the disciples. He knew a storm was brewing, that in a matter of moments the lives of the disciples were going to change forever. Note that it can be a sin not to pray.

3. Peter Trusted in Human Effort

Peter's third step down was trusting in human effort instead of God's power.

I suppose it's commendable that Peter wanted to help Jesus by cutting the servant's ear, but he was going about it in the wrong way. He couldn't get it right; he was boasting when he should have been listening, he was sleeping when he should have been praying—and now he was fighting when he should have been surrendering.

4. Peter Followed at a Distance

Peter's next step down was following at a distance at the time of the trial. Distance from fellowship with the Lord is at the heart of every fall. Peter was still following but at a distance.

Granted, it was more than some of the others could say, but he was at a distance.

This is the problem with some people of the church; they follow at a distance. They're late to church, early to leave, etc.

But when you follow at a distance you increase your vulnerability. Think about it: If the devil sees everyone moving together and then sees the half-hearted person following behind at a distance, that's a much easier prey to catch.

5. Peter Was in the Wrong Place

We see the fifth step to Peter's fall is when he joins the enemy's fire. He was now in the wrong place, with the wrong people. And when you hang out in the wrong places, with the wrong people, it's just a matter of time before you do the wrong thing. That's what happened to Peter. He would ultimately deny Jesus three times while there.

