

THE REJECTION OF THE KING

The Plot To Kill Jesus

Matthew 26:1-16

Chapter 26 begins the last and most pivotal section of **Matthew's** gospel. Everything else has been a *prologue*...an *introduction* to the great conclusion which focuses on the **cross**...the *culmination* of *redemptive history*...the only *eternal hope* of fallen mankind.

Everything in the story of God's redemptive plan centers on the **cross**... apart from which, no other *revelation* or *work* of God would have any ultimate value for sinful man. It's through the **cross** that Jesus has provided a way for sinners to be *saved* and united to holy God. There is *no salvation...no gospel...no biblical Christianity*...apart from the **cross**. The **cross** is the essence of *redemptive truth*. (**I Corinthians 1:18**)

The **cross** is the culmination of what has been foreshadowed throughout the Old Testament:

- In the *acceptable sacrifice of Abel*.
- In the *ark that save Noah and his family*.
- In the *substitute ram provided to Abraham* on **Mount Moriah** as the *substitute for Isaac*.
- In the *deliverance of Israel from Egypt* and the *crossing* of the **Red Sea**.
- In the *struck rock that brought forth water in the wilderness*.
- In the **Levitical sacrifices**.
- In the *serpent lifted up in the wilderness* for healing.
- In **Boaz** as **Ruth's kinsman redeemer**.
- And in *countless other Old Testament persons and events*.

All Old Testament *truth* and *history* points to the **cross** of Jesus Christ.

The Christian gospel is the message of the **cross**...the message of the *death* and *resurrection* of Jesus Christ...*Christ crucified!*

In these last three chapters, **Matthew** focuses on the **cross** through several culminating events.

- **Chapter 26**...details the *preparation for the cross* and the *arrest of Jesus*.
- **Chapter 27**...addresses Jesus' *trials, execution, and burial*.

- **Chapter 28**...reveals the *resurrection*, Jesus' *victory over death*, and His *final instructions to the disciples*.

Chapter 26 picks up the narrative at the end of the **Olivet Discourse**. It was still *Wednesday*...and it had been an unusually eventful day.

- Jesus had *taught the multitudes* in the Temple.
- He had been *questioned by the Pharisees' disciples*.
- Questioned by the *Sadducees*.
- Questioned by the *Pharisees*.
- And upon leaving the Temple, He went with His disciples to the **Mount of Olives** where He *taught them about His second coming*.

Now...Jesus abruptly brings the disciples back to the truths surrounding His *first coming*. For the *fourth* and final time (**Matthew 16:21**; **Matthew 17: 22-23**; **Matthew 20:18-19**) He told them of His inevitable death...which would occur in only *two more days* (**vs. 2**). The crucifixion was the next major event in Jesus' mission. Before He would return in glory and power, He must die...in willing and humble submission to His Father's plan (**John 10:17-18**).

I. **THE SOVEREIGN PLAN:** (**vs. 1-2**)

When Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be handed over for crucifixion" (**vs. 1-2**)...

When Jesus had finished all these words...this is the last of *five* such turning points in **Matthew's** gospel (**Matthew 7:28**; **Matthew 11:1**; **Matthew 13:53**; **Matthew 19:1**).

The Passover is coming...the appropriate time for Jesus to die was at **Passover**...when the sacrificial lambs were slain. Prior to now, the sacrifices of all the other lambs were but a faint symbol of what the true Lamb was soon to accomplish. As **John the Baptist** had proclaimed...

"...Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

~John 1:29

Paul declared to the **Corinthians** believers...

“...Christ our Passover has been sacrificed.”

~I Corinthians 5:7b

The Son of Man is to be handed over for crucifixion... Jesus had predicted *at least three times* previously that He would suffer and be put to death but would rise again on the third day.

There were many times when people had sought to kill Jesus but were unable to do so. The Jewish religious leaders began plotting His death soon after He began His public ministry (**John 5:18**)...but they were not able to fulfill their intention until it fit into God’s timetable.

Prior to now, every plan had failed because it wasn’t God’s time or God’s way for the Son to die. No human power could have accomplished it apart from God’s will...and now no human power could prevent it...because it was now God’s *sovereign plan*.

“This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”

~Acts 2:23

II. THE SCHEMING PLOT: (vs. 3-5)

As Jesus was speaking to His disciples that *Wednesday* evening on the **Mount of Olives**, the **Sanhedrin**, composed primarily of **the chief priests and the elders of the people** were *scheming* together a *plot* to **seize and kill** Jesus.

Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas (vs. 3)...

Chief priests...represented the *wealthy* and *influential religious nobility*.

Elders...represented the *wealthy* and *influential lay nobility*.

Scribes were present when Jesus was taken to **Caiaphas’** house after He was arrested (**Matthew 26:57**), so it is likely that some of them were also there at this time.

The high priest, named Caiaphas...Caiaphas was a *conniving, devious, deceitful, and treacherous* man. He is always depicted in Scripture in a *one-dimensional role*...one as Jesus’ *antagonist*. In

every passage where he is mentioned, he is seen pursuing the destruction of Jesus.

Like **Herod**...his hatred and fear of Jesus *wasn’t theological*...but *political*. **Caiaphas** wanted to destroy Jesus because he feared that He posed a serious threat to his position and power over the Jewish people. Driven purely by greed and selfish ambition, he had no sense of justice or righteousness. He had no regard for his country, his people, or his religion...except when they could be used to his personal advantage.

And they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him (vs. 4)...The **Sanhedrin** had assembled in **Caiaphas’** house for one purpose...and that was to plot how they could **seize and kill** Jesus.

Stealth...They wanted to do it by **stealth** in order to not antagonize the masses in the city where Jesus was popular.

But they were saying, “Not during the festival, otherwise a riot might occur among the people.” (vs. 5)...**Jerusalem** would have been overflowing with people...those who had come to worship at the **Passover festival**. According to **Josephus**, some **257,000 lambs** were sacrificed during a typical **Passover**. And because *tradition* required that no fewer than *ten* people were to eat one lamb, the number of people could have exceeded *two million*.

Many of the worshipers would have been from **Galilee** and other places where Jesus had ministered and gained great popularity for His powerful teaching and the miracles that He performed. As a result, the Jewish leaders didn’t want to actuate their plot until after the **Passover festival** had ended.

III. THE SACRIFICIAL PREPARATION: (vs. 6-13)

Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at the table (vs. 6-7)...During the final week of His life before going to the cross, the Lord spent the nights in **Bethany**, east of **Jerusalem** on the south slopes of the **Mount of Olives**.

While in **Bethany**, Jesus and the disciples were invited to **the home of Simon the leper** for supper. From **John’s** account (**John 12:1-8**), we learn that **Mary, Martha, and Lazarus** were also present and that **Martha** served the meal (**vs. 1-3**).

Simon the leper...Since a **leper** wasn't allowed to live in or near a public place, and wasn't allowed to associate with non-lepers...it's clear that **Simon** had been cleansed. And because the disease was incurable by medical means, he apparently had been miraculously healed by Jesus. In gratitude for that healing, he had invited Jesus and the others to his house for a meal.

During the supper, a **woman**, whom **Matthew** doesn't identify but **John** tells us that it was **Mary (John 12:3)**, came to Him with an **alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at the table**. From **Mark** we learn that the very costly perfume was worth *over three hundred denarii*...about *a year's wages* for a *common laborer* or *soldier*...and that the expensive **alabaster vial** was broken...making **Mary's** act even more costly (**Mark 14:3-5**).

Mary's act prepared His body **for burial (vs. 12)**. She performed this act as a testimony of her unmeasured love for Jesus. The perfume was a *pound of pure nard* which she also used to anoint Jesus' feet (**John 12:3**). Just like she poured out the perfume...she was pouring out her soul in worship. Being absolutely controlled by the Holy Spirit and her adoration for the Lord, she showed no restraint...cost meant nothing. Without hesitation, she offered her most expensive earthly possession to the Lord in an act of worship.

But the disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, "Why this waste? For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor." (vs. 8-9)...With a prompting from **Judas (John 12:4-5)** the insensitive **disciples** became **indignant** at what they presumed was a waste of valuable **perfume**.

Even if the **perfume** had been sold...the funds wouldn't have been used to help the **poor**. Since **Judas** was the *treasurer* of the group and also a *thief*...he no doubt would have embezzled most of the money for himself (**John 12:6**).

But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me. For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me" (vs. 10-11)...In the *parable of the sheep and the goats*, Jesus had just taught that *meeting physical needs* is important and is a mark of genuine salvation. But here, Jesus stresses that *genuine worship* is

the ultimate service a believer can offer the Lord. There is a time for *ministering to the poor*...the *sick*...the *naked*...and *those in prison*. There's a time for *witnessing to the lost* and *discipling new believers*. There's a time for *studying* and *teaching God's Word*. But above all else...**true worship is preeminent!**

For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her (vs. 12-13)...What Mary did was of lasting significance. In fulfillment of the Lord's prediction, for *over two thousand years* what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her. She is a continuous example to all believers of *unselfish, sacrificial adoration*.

IV. THE **SELFISH PERFDY**: (vs. 14-16)

Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests, and said, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. From then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus (vs. 14-16)...In contrast to **Mary's adoring worship**... **Judas Iscariot** gave testimony of *betraying hypocrisy*.

Judas Iscariot must have been viewed by the Jewish religious leaders as an *answer to their prayers*. His offer to the chief priests to **betray** Jesus was more than agreeing to point out Jesus to the arresting officers...he was offering his services as a witness against Jesus when He would be brought to trial.

The religious leaders eagerly **weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him**. In doing so...**Judas** not only sold out his *teacher* and *friend*... but *betrayed the very Son of God*...*who had come to be his Savior*.

Having committed himself to the treachery...**from then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus**.

In the greatest example of forsaken opportunity the world has ever known...**Judas forever turned his back on the Lord** and on his own *salvation*.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **Worship is preeminent!** All other service is good, but...
- **God is sovereign and supreme!** No plan of man usurps the will and plan of God.