

Lesson #27- Matthew Chapter 26 Questions for Discussion (With Help for Teachers):

In this chapter:

- Renewed warning to the disciples. From Prophet to Priest.
- The plot to kill Jesus
- Jesus anointed for burial, the alabaster box of ointment
- Jesus sold for thirty pieces of silver
- The last supper
- The warning of denial
- The agony in the garden
- Betrayal and arrest
- The mock trial before Caiaphas and the Jewish leaders
- Peter's denial

1. Looking at verses 1 and 2, what do you think is important about "when Jesus had finished all these sayings" and why does Jesus speak as though His betrayal has already happened?

Help for Teachers:

Jesus is the Supreme and Final of all three offices appointed by God and revered by Israel... Prophet, Priest, and King. It is now two days until Jesus will be betrayed. His teaching and preaching role of Prophet it seems has been accomplished in fulfillment of Moses' prophesy, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;" (Deut 18:15). Jesus' attention is now focused on accomplishing the true sacrifice for sin. He would end the Levitical sacrifices that could never resolve the sin issue, but only pointed to the perfect sacrifice that would one day be accomplished. One day was about to happen, Jesus was headed to the cross. Unlike the Levitical priests or the order of Aaron, who offered sacrifices continually that only spoke of something better and must be oft repeated, Jesus takes up His role as High Priest and finishes it once for all. As the writer of Hebrews describes Him, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb 5:6,10/ 6:20/ 7:11, 17, 21- Also Psalms 110:4)

Bonus question: What do you know about Melchisedec, or maybe just as important, what do you not know about Melchisedec?

Verse 2 reads, "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." By this point in our studies of Matthew a pattern should have emerged in our consciousness of the sovereignty of God. There is an irrevocable plan that God has established before the earth and man were created.

Through this gospel we see God working out His plan so that He is redeeming to Himself a people for the glory of His name. Every detail has been ordained from the foundation of the earth, even the very words that Jesus will say. Nothing will preempt this plan as God unfolds it, it's as good as done. Hence Jesus says, "... the Son of Man is betrayed", already done, even though the event is two days in the future.

2. Verses 4-5: Why do you think these very respected and law-abiding, even more so, law-administering people would consult (conspire) to murder someone by subtility (treachery)?

Help for Teachers:

Their true nature (human leadership- specifically of the Jews) was being revealed. Think back through our studies; how many times has Jesus called this group hypocrites?

There was truly no fault in Jesus. There was literally not one law that they could rightly accuse Him of breaking, and certainly nothing that warranted the death penalty.

Notice their motivation, "Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people." The rulers have one imperative in the murder plot, "Not on the feast day". Anything else is up for discussion. But the latter part of their imperative, from their own lips, reveals their purpose, "lest there be an uproar among the people". They had no concerns about violating the law and sanctity of the feast day. They weren't worried about offending God if the plot unfolded on the feast day. They feared that the common people, who at the least saw Jesus as a prophet, who He had walked among and ministered to, might revolt, and challenge their authority and revered position. They were concerned only with their worldly kingdom that they had created in opposition to the kingdom of heaven. Highly condemning of their blatant rejection of the truth of Jesus' Messiahship is Nicodemus' confession in John 3 that "we", that is this group that made up the Sanhedrin, that is now plotting the murder of the Lord, knows that He is a "teacher come from God".

But be cautious not to think that the rulers of Israel are alone in their rejection of revealed truth, for the apostle Paul extends the guilt to all humanity in Romans 1:18-21, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

These wicked men, though they thought they were advancing their own cause and kingdom, were in fact being used of God to fulfil the plan that He had established before the foundation of the world to accomplish salvation for His people.

Bonus question if you want to tackle it: Does God ordain (will it and cause it to happen) sin?

3. Discuss the significance of the woman and the alabaster box of ointment and the blessing Jesus bestowed on her.

Help for Teachers:

The woman and her actions:

The identity of the woman has been speculated through the ages. We know that this event occurs in Bethany, at Simon the leper's, which is on the fringes of Jerusalem. Likely Simon the leper is one that has been cured by Jesus and Jesus accepts his hospitable offer of lodging. Some scholars believe that this "Mary" is the same that was the sister of Martha, from the earlier gospel account where their brother, Lazarus, was raised from the dead by Jesus. Some also believe that this Mary, the sister of Martha, is also Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus had cast out devils.

Whoever she is, we find that she bestows upon her Savior a great honor, as she demonstrates her faith that He is indeed the Lord, Messiah, King, and Anointed One of God! Just like in the days of Jesus earthly ministry when He asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I am?", and the answers were many and varied, so it remains today when men are asked the question, "who is Jesus?" But how powerful the testimony when someone responds conclusively, as did Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God", but then as did this woman, demonstrates her faith in Jesus' identity by personally making Him King with her most precious treasures. Matthew says it was "an alabaster box of very precious ointment".

The disciples and their reactions:

The disciples took a serious left turn at the pouring out of this ointment. They became indignant. Their evaluation was that this ointment could have been sold for a lot of money and the proceeds used for the benefit of the poor. Take notice of how they replied, "To what purpose is this waste?" We must be careful about making judgement calls when we see someone that we think is "over-the-top" in some form of giving or sacrificing in the service and worship of our Lord. It's easy to have blurry vision when we look at the example of complete self-denial we see in Jesus' personal ministry as the Son of man and try to reconcile that with the fact of His infinite worth as the Son of God. It's easy to forget that just because he used three fishes and five loaves to feed thousands doesn't mean His resources are limited in any way, or that what is used in worshipfully honoring Him is "lost" and limits what can be accomplished in other areas of service. As another thought, had this woman not poured out the ointment on Jesus, would it have ever occurred to the disciples to encourage her to sell her alabaster box so they could do more ministry to the poor among them? (I don't think so).

Jesus and His response:

Notice how Jesus, despite all the logic and reasoning of the disciples, comes to the defense of this lady, “Why trouble ye the woman?” Have you ever had other Christians question your motive for service or worship? Have you ever questioned someone else’s motivation in worship? How discouraging it can be when those that are supposed to be with us give out that disapproving look or make some disparaging remark. Jesus’ approval was the one that mattered, and He made it perfectly clear, “for she hath wrought a good work upon me.” There are many worthy things the church is commanded to do... care for widows and orphans, provide relief for the poor, and even the commission to take the gospel to the nations, but none supersedes the main purpose of the church, which has always been and will always be to glorify God through Jesus Christ!

Jesus doesn’t stop at “leave her alone”, or even at a declaration of His approval of her use of the ointment. He pushes against the disciple’s claimed concern for the poor, making the statement that the poor are always here, and it seems to me He is pointing out, if you are so concerned about the welfare of the poor, why haven’t you tried to sell some valuables before now to help give them relief? Or what’s stopping you from doing good for them in the future; the using of this ointment doesn’t mark the end of opportunity. However, Jesus makes it clear that some opportunities, such as His physical presence among them, do have time constraints we should be considerate of.

Nothing God does is without intent and planned purpose. God is never random; no detail is ever left to chance. Though the disciples are unaware, and it seems to me that even the lady with the ointment may not understand the significance, this act of worship is also filled with gospel meaning, as it is the anointing of His body for burial (Verse 12).

Jesus’ delight in our giving Him our utmost honor by demonstrating that He is our great treasure and the One that is worthy of whatever is most valuable in our life is made clear. He declares that His pleasure in this woman’s use of the ointment is so great that He is giving her a special honor, of being mentioned wherever this gospel is preached from now on!

4. What is the significance of thirty pieces of silver?

Help for Teachers:

30 pieces of silver is the fair market value for a slave by the law (Ex 21:32). It is also the prophesied amount in Zechariah 11:12-13. Today’s equivalent value in U.S. dollars ranges wildly, depending on who’s math you are following, but most scholars agree that it is a pitifully small amount of money.

It's noteworthy to understand that Judas was never given provocation to betray Jesus. Nothing Jesus ever said or did led Judas to feel rejected or marginalized. Judas was given a position of trust within the group that made him the keeper of the purse. The Pharisees never came looking for Judas to offer him a deal; Judas sought out the Pharisees and initiated the dialogue, "What will ye give me..." There is reason to think that Judas may already, in his position as treasurer, have been stealing from the support of the ministry. Judas had earlier made clear his disapproval of Mary's use of what he valued as three hundred pence worth of ointment, when she anointed Jesus' feet with spikenard and wiped them with her hair. He claimed that the ointment should have been sold to support the poor (the same argument the disciples now had), but Scripture reveals his true motivation (John 12:6). It seems evident that we should be cautious of "jumping on someone's bandwagon" too quickly. It seems the first complaint, by Judas, against Mary's use of ointment, and his deceptive rational, had somehow stuck in the minds of the other disciples, as they now parrot the same complaint against this innocent lady (maybe the same Mary). But isn't our Lord wonderful, as He sees through all of it and takes this woman who would surely be feeling needless guilt under the censorship of the disciples, and not only vindicates her publicly, but gives her a great blessing. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb 4:13)

5. Why does the church practice a "last supper" ordinance? Where do we find authority and/or command to do this and what does it mean? Where do you find basis for your answers in Scriptures?

Help for Teachers:

Jesus observed this last supper, the Passover, with His disciples. In Luke 22:15 Jesus expressed how much He desired to eat this Passover with His disciples. It was important to Jesus because it represented the actual event about to transpire, that the Exodus Passover was only representative of. Jesus was hours away from offering Himself as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world". He would literally give His sinless body and blood as the payment for the sins of all His people, all that will come to Him by faith.

The meal was symbolic, a memorial of what Jesus was about to do for His people. The price of our redemption, the cost of our justification, was nothing less than the body and blood and death of the sinless Son of God. Jesus made the symbolism perfectly clear, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

The fact that this ordinance has no saving power and is certainly not the literal body and blood of Christ is first made evident in the fact of Judas' participation in the meal.

In verse 29 Jesus makes it clear that He will not again partake of this Passover meal until He drinks it "new with you in my Father's kingdom." We, the church, however, are commanded to come together and remember the death of our Lord through this ordinance until He returns.

Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 11 that Jesus Himself commanded that we partake of this ordinance to remember His death until He returns. Our understanding of how we are to partake of the Lord's supper and what qualifies one to partake are also largely established in 1 Corinthians 11.

6. In verses 31-35 there is a warning, a rebuttal, a second and more detailed warning, and yet another rebuttal. What did Jesus base this warning on? What lesson might we learn from the warning Jesus gives and the posture that the disciples take?

Help for Teachers:

Warning: Jesus takes the disciples out into the Mount of Olives. There He warns them that they would all be offended and scattered because of Him that very night. But He also encourages them with the promise that He will rise again, and that He will precede them into Galilee.

Rebuttal: Peter promptly declares that Jesus is wrong, that even if everyone else abandons Jesus, he will never be offended in Him.

Second and more specific warning: Jesus now tells Peter that of a truth, before the rooster crows tonight, you (specifically Peter) are going to deny me three times.

Another rebuttal: Peter takes it to the max, as he responds by saying that even if he must die, he will never deny Jesus. All of the other disciples, emboldened by Peter's boast, declare the same thing.

The basis Jesus gives for the warning: "for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."

Jesus tells them that this will happen, they will all be offended because of Him and scattered. It is the plan that God has set in motion that will in no small detail be altered, as Jesus references the prophesy of God given to Zechariah in chapter 13:7. But don't miss that Jesus makes clear that, as the Good Shepherd, He will not leave His scattered sheep. No, He will not loose even one that has been given to Him by the Father (John 18:9). He will go before them (lead, as a shepherd leads) into Galilee. Like the one that strays from the fold in the parable of the ninety and nine, though scattered they will not be left to wander and die. If they are His, Jesus will

seek them out and lead them back. Even the scattering was for their good, that they be protected from what was coming; even though they didn't see it at the moment (Rom 8:28).

All this being said, Jesus again brings it back to the plan, the plan that was put in place from the foundation of the world, the plan that would bring ultimate glory to the "only wise God", as both Paul and Jude call Him. Jesus says later in this same chapter, "But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." (Verse 56).

7. Jesus prays "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." How is it possible that Jesus, the Son of God, expresses a different will than that of the Father?

Help for Teachers:

It is important to understand that Jesus is real flesh and blood. He has become us to save us, and in all ways, He partakes in the same experiences we do, "yet without sin" (Heb 4:15). He identifies Himself as "Son of man" more often than by any other title during His earthly ministry.

While "Son of man", Jesus at no time relinquishes His deity; He never ceases to be God the Son. Therefore, knowing all things that must be accomplished to fulfil the plan that had been set in motion before the world began by the Godhead, He is fully aware of the unparalleled suffering He must now endure.

It has been argued that when Jesus prays "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me", He is not referring to the physical suffering He must endure as a Man, but is only speaking of the separation that is to come between Himself and the Father.

A related topic if you want to include it: The idea that in taking on our punishment the Son is separated from the Father, that the Father "turns His face away" or turns His back on the Son becomes a complicated but interesting study. Matthew 27:46 reads, "...My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Much of the basis for this idea is that Jesus now, and only here, addresses His Father as God. In every other instance in all His personal ministry, Jesus always calls Him "Father". Why?

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is a quote from Psalms 22:1. Is David, in this Psalm, referring to some personal experience from his life? As the Psalm unfolds it becomes apparent that this is prophetic. David never experienced the suffering described in Psalms 22; David's hands and feet were never pierced (V16), no one ever parted his garments or cast lots for his vesture (V18). But Jesus suffered all these abuses as He died for our sins. This Psalm is a prophetic script of the crucifixion and suffering of Jesus Christ and begins with this agonizing cry of abandonment. By verse 3 there is a "but" and then a reflection of God's dependability and constant protection. Verses 6-8 seems to reflect the position of the mocking crowds. Verse 9 begins with another "but", and continues in a vein of trust and hope that God is

and will be there as the source of protection and strength throughout the entire passion event and seems to climax in verse 24, that emphatically declares, "For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; *neither hath he hid his face from him*, but when he cried unto him, he heard."

Again, the Psalm begins with a prophesy of the exact words Jesus will cry with a loud voice from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" David then records that the earthly fathers of Israel were delivered by the Holy God in whom they trusted, and greatly praised Him because of it. But in Jesus' humanity He suffered as though, and to the watching world it looked as though, God had forsaken His Son. But, in keeping with the Psalm, it seems there is nothing to ground the idea that the Father ever abandoned or turned his face away from the Son (Is not separation from God the ultimate punishment for sin?). So, which is it? Did Jesus suffer being separated from the Father as He died on the cross, or not?

Isaiah 50:4-9 [especially 7], John 16:32, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 all seem to support that there never was a "turning away" or "turning His face away" from the Son. Jesus did teach others about "God", but in all of the gospels there is no place where Jesus personally addresses the Father in any other way than "Father" (except for this quote from Psalms 22:1). And so, it seems at first glance that Jesus is now speaking, as He addresses His Father as "God", that there has occurred a positional change, that Jesus is now in the position of a sinner, outside of the mercies of God. But on closer inspection, Jesus' cry is, "My God...". This is not the language of abandonment, but of inclusion of a covenant people (Gen 17:8, Ex 29:45, Lev 26:45, Jer. 24:7, Jer. 31:33, Jer. 32:38, Ezek. 11:20, Ezek. 37:23, Zech. 8:8). What a thought that Jesus secured our relationship by doing for us what Israel couldn't do... obey (Jer. 7:23)!

Even Jesus' last recorded words from the cross were, "...**Father**, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost (Luke 23:46), back to a relational position. But there is no denying that Jesus, with loud voice, asked the question, "Why have you forsaken me?" ... forsaken means abandoned.

The answer is found in the hypostatic union, the understanding that Jesus was [and is] fully God and at the same time fully Man. It would reason that Jesus is here speaking from His humanity. The punishment decreed for the sin that man commits, now being paid for by the sinless Son of man, is nothing less than separation from God. Yet at the same time, Jesus never ceases to be fully God and at no time is the Godhead divided. The separation ends in triumph, as the offering for sin is accepted, as evidenced by the resurrection!

In both cases (physical suffering and separation), the events Jesus knew were before Him were real. He hurt and suffered physically and emotionally and in all other ways, just as does all humanity (Heb 4:15). Can you imagine knowing that you were about to be arrested, tried, and condemned by intentional deceit, by the very people you love and were giving everything for. Do you think Jesus wanted, as a man, to have His beard ripped out, to have thorns pounded into His head, to be beaten with a whip designed to rip away flesh, or to have nails pounded through His hands and feet? The obvious answer is no; that would have not been His will. If you add the concept of separation from the Father into the list, certainly Jesus, as Son of man, did not "will" to suffer all these undeserved abuses. The writer of Hebrews says in 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him *endured* the cross, *despising* the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Back to the question of wills and why Jesus has a will that is yielded to a different will, that of the Father, we find that God has two distinct wills.

The first is His sovereign will, or will of decree, or declarative will. This will is immutable. It cannot be altered. It is ordained. It is predestined. It will happen. For instance, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt 24:35). The inclusion of the gentiles into the true Israel is another example recorded in Romans 11:28-29, “As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” God’s will of decree is not limited by anything and even governs sin where God so chooses. Acts 4:24-30 records a prayer from the early church at Jerusalem concerning the persecution they were experiencing:

*[24] And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: [25] Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? [26] The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. [27] **For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, [28] For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. [29] And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, [30] By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.***

God does not sin, but even sin and sinners are bound and used under His declarative will. Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, the people of Israel, all unified in the murder of the Son of God. The early disciples well knew (finally) that all these events had occurred because God had so decreed that they would happen, to bring to fruition His plan. God made them happen, even the sinful acts of all these people, “*For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done*”.

When speaking of God’s will in Scripture, He has an apparent second type of will, often referred to as His will of command, or permissive will. A good example of this would be the law. “Thou shalt not steal”, which is one of the ten commandments. It is a command. God has directed that we do not steal, but He has not decreed or ordained that we do not steal. There are consequences for violating His command, and yet we have the capacity to obey or disobey. Another example would be Matthew 11:28-29, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”. Jesus has commanded that we come to Him with our burdens, but we must choose to obey or not. He says to “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me”, but you can ignore His order and not yield to His “will of command” or “permissive will”.

So, we have here, (1) God’s *decreed will*, that cannot be altered and has or will be accomplished as He has ordained, no matter what anyone or anything in creation says or does. And we also

have, (2) God's permissive will, He has given command that we do or don't do something but has left us with choice and consequences.

Knowing that God has a decreed will and a permissive will, it makes perfect sense that as fully man, Jesus certainly did not will to suffer all that was immediately before Him. Nevertheless, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15), He yielded His will and was obedient to the Father. Philippians 2:8 says, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

8. Jesus' betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection is beyond anything a human poet or writer could ever have dreamed up. Twice Jesus straightly reveals why the story unfolded in such a way. What explanation did Jesus give and what is so important about it?

Help for Teachers:

Verse 54: "But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

Verse 56: "But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled."

In order that we may see His supreme glory, God has made it clear that our salvation is by a plan that He designed from before the world was made, a plan that not only He designed, but that He accomplished by Himself, completely devoid of any intervention on the part of man. It is a plan that displays to the utmost the unfathomable power, love, and glory of God.

Some texts that make this apparent:

*"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; **glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:** As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. **I have glorified thee on the earth:** I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, **glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.**" (John 17:1-5)*

*"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: **Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**" (John 1:12-13)*

*"The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, **For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.**" (Acts 4:26-28)*

*“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life **of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**” (Rev 13:8)*

*“And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: **for thus it is written by the prophet,**” (Matt 2:5)*

*“For this is he, **of whom it is written,** Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.” (Matt 11:10)*

“The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.” (Matt 26:24)

*“Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: **for it is written,** I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.” (Matt 26:31)*

*“Now all this was done, **that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet,** saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” (Matt 1:22-23)*

*Other Matthew passages with “**might be fulfilled**” or “**be fulfilled**”: 4:14, 8:17, 13:35, 21:4, 24:34, 26:54-56, 27:35*

9. Discuss the trial at the high priest’s palace. What details do you find incredible?

Help for Teachers:

Mostly what I see is how incredibly apparent it was to the collective Jewish enemies of Jesus (religious, wise, and civil leaders) how innocent He was, yet how willing they were to throw out the moral values they were so zealous to be known by, as keepers and teachers of the law. Their need to discredit and kill Jesus was so encompassing that they took any and all risks to their reputation to accomplish the task. In the process they unwittingly painted a precise picture of the sacrifices of the law; an innocent and perfect lamb being blamed and killed for the sins of the people.

Vs 59: “Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, **sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;**” They actively and intentionally looked for liars, to the end that they might “legally” have Him killed.

Vs 60: “But **found none:** yea, though **many false witnesses came, yet found they none.** At the last came two false witnesses,”

Mark 14:56 records the same, “For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.”

Quite a few have advocated that the arrest and the trial of Jesus were illegal, based on Jewish laws governing prosecution of crimes in that era.

Their desperation to be rid of Jesus is seen in the depth to which they would stoop. These self-proclaimed law keepers who “bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders”, demanded from the people strict moral uprightness. In their behavior at the trial, Jesus’ words become ever more apparent, “but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers”. Not only were the false witnesses so helpless to point out any wrong in Jesus that they couldn’t even be consistent in their lies, but these rulers couldn’t even decide what it was they were accusing Jesus of... they changed their mind and the official charges based on the audience they were pandering to.

Notice that the charge they finally landed on before the Sanhedrin was “blasphemy”. When the false witnesses had failed, the high priest demanded that Jesus answer the question of His deity. Jesus’ answer was “Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. (V64)”. To this the high priest tore his clothes in a dramatic show intended to incite the crowd and said, “He hath spoken **blasphemy**; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his **blasphemy**. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. (V65-66)”

But notice what the official charges are changed to when they bring Jesus before the Roman ruler, Pilate. Now they say, “We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. (Luke 23:2). What Jesus really said and taught concerning the occupying Roman government was quite opposite. Read Matthew 22:16-21.

10. What important lessons do you see in Peter’s denial?

Help for Teachers:

As people go, Peter was no pushover. It seems apparent from what Scripture reveals of his character, he was determined and hardheaded, and when it came to Jesus, he was fiercely loyal. Notwithstanding, he, like all of us, proved a complete failure when operating in the power of the flesh.

Jesus had warned all the disciples that they would be “offended” because of Him and be scattered. Peter had boldly replied that even if all the others were, he would never be, that he would be faithful even if it cost him his life. Peter displayed that determination in the garden as he attempted to defend Jesus with a sword against the mob there to arrest Him (but he is so sleepy that his aim is bad, and he misses 😊).

Peter is even gutsy enough to follow Jesus and the arrest party into the lion's den... the high priest's house. But the next record of Peter we have is of him behaving exactly as the Lord had said. As Peter "sees for himself" that Jesus is helpless before His enemies (Isa.53:7), and all seems lost, Peter goes into self-protect mode. Peter's words go from bold allegiance to vehement denial of Jesus, not once but three times... and the cock crowed.

Who could deny that among New Testament characters, Peter ranks very near the top in terms of faith and followship. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:". So, certainly this text of Scripture is profitable for us. If Peter could fall into denial, couldn't we? What happened to Peter? What could happen to us? How can we understand the Bible's teachings and be reproved, corrected, and instructed in righteousness so that we learn from God's Word and not stumble into the same trap? Or how can we see that we are already in the trap and be restored?

Some things it seems would be good to observe:

1. Peter's confidence/ our confidence

In verse 31. Jesus' warning and foretelling was that "all" ... "all" those assembled disciples, would be offended, and scattered from Him. Peter replied with an "I" answer. Not I. I am confident in myself. I know myself. I will never fail because I have the willpower. I am special and this can't apply to me.

Peter, and often we, look to our own strengths and abilities. We forget quickly that Jesus is the source of all power. When the Assyrians under Sennacherib came against Jerusalem, Hezekiah told Judah, "With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles". Peter, and we, fail when we rely on the "arm of flesh". The Assyrians would have demolished Jerusalem, but God was their strength, "And the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword." (2 Chron. Chapter 32)

2. Peter's attention/ our attention

Jesus again was preparing the disciples for the events to come. He had clearly taught that a plan was being followed that must be accomplished for their and our redemption. Failure on Peter's part to pay attention led him to a wrong conclusion that it would be Christ honoring to fight with a physical sword against the very thing Jesus had come to accomplish. We must pay attention to the Word. We are to give it the utmost attention and heed.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Tim 2:15)

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Peter 1:19-21)

Peter would have done well to focus on what Jesus was saying. We will do well to focus on what He is saying to us through Scripture.

3. Jesus’ hold on Peter/ Jesus’ hold on us

In Matthew 26:32 Jesus says “But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.”

Mark 14:28 records the same words of Jesus.

Luke 22:31-32 records more of the dialogue leading up to Jesus’ prediction of Peter’s denial, “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

Notice that in this (Luke 22:31-32), Jesus concludes His statement with encouragement that Peter’s failure will not be his end. And in the above texts in Matthew and Mark, Jesus front-loads the prediction of Peter’s denial and the scattering of the disciples with encouragement that, again, this won’t be the end of the story, there’s going to be a resurrection and Jesus will go on before.

The critical, doctrinal truth in point: our grip on Jesus isn’t what secures us, His grip on us is what matters and He will lose none that the Father has given Him. Paul writes to the Galatians like this, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? *Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*” In Romans 8:38-39 Paul also writes, “*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”