

“FROM MATTHEW’S POINT OF VIEW”

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

SESSION 9 – THE PASSION IN MATTHEW

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In preparation for Easter, repeatedly review the Scriptures below, until you are able to make your way through the above list, confident that you have a good grasp of the details within all these events.

Matthew 26:14-16 - The Betrayal

Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

- *Thirty pieces of silver – the value put on the life of a slave (Exodus 21:32)*

Matthew 26:31-35 – The Boast

Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.”

“Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.”

But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the other disciples said the same.

- *“Rooster” – Possibly the Roman trumpet (gallicinium) announcing the 3am shift change. Ancient Rabbinical sources (and Josephus) tell us poultry was forbidden in Jerusalem!*

Matthew 26:69-75 – The Denial

Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said.

But he denied it before them all. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said.

Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!”

After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”

Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!” Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

- *Note that Peter’s Galilee accent is a giveaway*

Matthew 27:3-10 – The Remorse

When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. “I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.”

“What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.”

So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

The chief priests picked up the coins and said, “It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.” So they decided to use the money to buy the potter’s field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: “They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter’s field, as the Lord commanded me.”

- *This is a reference to Zechariah’s parable of the Two Shepherds (Zechariah 11)*

Matthew 26:36-46 – Gethsemane

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

- *The scene starts in the Olive Press Cave (Gethsemane) where the disciples shelter, but moves outdoors for the prayers*

Matthew 26:47-56 – The Arrest

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.

Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.” Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

“Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”

In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

- *Jesus continues to refer to Judas as “Friend.” Luke mentions that the injured man, identified by John as “Malchus,” is healed by Jesus. Matthew again points out the “fulfillment” aspect of the Passion narrative*

Matthew 26:57-68; 27:1-2 – The Sanhedrin “Trial”

Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

“You have said so,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”

“He is worthy of death,” they answered.

Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him and said, “Prophesy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?”

Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

- *The meeting takes place in Caiaphas’ home. The “blasphemy” charge arises from Jesus identifying himself as the Messiah. Bringing him to Pilate was a way to diffuse criticism from the possibly unpopular outcome of Jesus’ death*

Matthew 27:11-26 – Jesus and Pilate

Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

“You have said so,” Jesus replied.

When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, “Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?” But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.

Now it was the governor’s custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.

While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.”

But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

“Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” asked the governor.

“Barabbas,” they answered.

“What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” Pilate asked.

They all answered, “Crucify him!”

“Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!”

All the people answered, “His blood is on us and on our children!”

Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

- *Pilate’s wife is unnamed, but tradition supplies the name “Claudia.” Sainted in the Greek church, she is supposed by some to be the “Claudia” referred to by Paul in 2 Timothy 4:21.*

Matthew 27:33-44 – The Crucifixion

They came to a place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head they placed the written charge against him: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.

Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

- *Why no wine? Jesus had said at the Last Supper that he would drink no wine “until I drink it new with you in the Father’s Kingdom.”*

Matthew 27:45-50; 27:54 – The Death of Jesus

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.” Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

...When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”

- *“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani” is Aramaic, translated by Matthew to explain the “Elijah” mockery. It is the beginning line of Psalm 22, which parallels the crucifixion, as in these verses from Psalm 22:
7 All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads.
8 “He trusts in the Lord,” they say, “let the Lord rescue him.”
14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint.
15 My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
16 A pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet.
18 They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.*

Matthew 27:51-53 – The Supernatural Signs

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus’ resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

- *The tearing of the curtain, which concealed the innermost Holy of Holies in the temple, is symbolic of the end of the separation between God and humanity. The reference to the resurrection of the holy is unique to Matthew, and anticipates the promise of Resurrection to all the people of God, thanks to the work of Jesus on the cross.*

Matthew 27:55-56 – The Witnessing Women

Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

- *Where were the men? They were said to have fled at the arrest. The fearless women remain, witnesses to the death, burial and resurrection.*

Matthew 27:57-61 – The Burial

As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus’ body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

- *Once evening arrived, the time for burial expires, as Passover would begin. A hasty burial nearby was the only workable solution.*

Matthew 27:62-66 – The Guards

The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. “Sir,” they said, “we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first.”

“Take a guard,” Pilate answered. “Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.” So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

- *“deceiver” or “imposter” are valid translations, and give an insight as to how Jesus was regarded by the religious officials; the “cover-up” is foreshadowed.*

Matthew 28:1-10 – The Resurrection

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

- *The angel (“Do not be afraid!”) offers a message, proof, and instructions which are not his own (“Now I have told you”).*
- *Jesus greets the women with Xairete! Literally, “Rejoice!” Also, a common greeting, used in Greek today as “Hello.”*

Matthew 28:11-15 – The Cover-Up

While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.”

So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

- *“to this very day” indicates that this cover-up was still in force during the composition of the Gospel, some 30 years later. It was still in circulation in 165 AD, as quoted by Justin Martyr; still in the 500s in a Jewish writing, “Toledoth Yeshu.” Note that there is never any doubt that the tomb is empty.*