

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
12-13-23

Matthew 26

The Plot Against Jesus – Verses 1-2

¹ When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, ² “As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

26:1-2 When Jesus had finished all these sayings: In Matthew’s Gospel, the teaching of Jesus is finished here. In these last days leading up to His betrayal and crucifixion, He warned the multitudes about the corrupt religious leadership and He spoke to His disciples about things to come. Now, it was time for Jesus to fulfill His work on the cross.

The Plot Against Jesus – Verses 3-5

³ Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴ and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. ⁵ “But not during the festival,” they said, “or there may be a riot among the people.”

26:3 Caiaphas was the ruling high priest during Jesus’ ministry. He was the son-in-law of Annas, the previous high priest. The Roman government had taken over the process of appointing all political and religious leaders. Caiaphas served for 18 years, longer than most high priests, suggesting that he was gifted at cooperating with the Romans. He was the first to recommend Jesus’ death in order to “save” the nation (John 11: 49-50).

26:3-5 This was a deliberate plot to kill Jesus. Without this plot, there would have been no groundswell of popular opinion against him. In fact, because of Jesus’ popularity, the religious leaders were afraid to arrest him during the Passover. They did not want their actions to incite a riot.

Jesus Anointed at Bethany – Verses 6-13

⁶ While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, ⁷ a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. ⁸ When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. “Why this waste?” they asked. ⁹ “This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.” ¹⁰ Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹ The poor you will always have with you,^[a] but you will not always have me. ¹² When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. ¹³ Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

26:6-13 Matthew and Mark put this event just before the Last Supper, while John has it just before the Triumphal Entry. Of the three, John places this event in the most likely chronological order. We must remember that the main purpose of the Gospel writers was to give an accurate record of Jesus’ message, not to present an exact chronological account of his life. Matthew and Mark may have chosen to place this event here to contrast the complete devotion of Mary with the betrayal of Judas, the next event they record in their Gospels.

26:7 This woman was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who lived in Bethany (John 12: 1-3). Alabaster jars were carved from a translucent gypsum. These jars were used to hold perfumed oil.

26:11 Here Jesus brought back to mind Deuteronomy 15: 11: “There will always be poor people in the land.” This statement does not justify ignoring the needs of the poor. Scripture continually exhorts us to care for the needy. The passage in Deuteronomy continues: “Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.” Rather, by saying this, Jesus highlighted the special sacrifice Mary made for him.

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus – Verses 14-16

14 Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests **15** 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. **16** From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

26:14-15 Why would Judas want to betray Jesus? Judas, like the other disciples, expected Jesus to start a political rebellion and overthrow Rome. As treasurer, Judas certainly assumed (as did the other disciples— see Mark 10: 35-37) that he would be given an important position in Jesus’ new kingdom. Jesus’ kingdom was not physical or political but spiritual. Judas’s greedy desire for money and status could not be realized if he followed Jesus, so he betrayed Jesus in exchange for money and favor from the religious leaders.

26:15 Matthew alone records the exact amount of money Judas accepted to betray Jesus— 30 silver coins, the price of a slave (Exodus 21: 32). The religious leaders had planned to wait until after the Passover to take Jesus, but with Judas’s unexpected offer, they accelerated their plans.

The Last Supper – Verses 17-20

17 On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?” **18** He replied, “Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.’” **19** So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. **20** When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve.

26:17 The Passover took place on one night and at one meal, but the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which was celebrated with it, continued for a week. The people removed all yeast from their homes in commemoration of their ancestors’ exodus from Egypt, when they did not have time to let the bread dough rise. Thousands of people poured into Jerusalem from all over the Roman Empire for this festival.

Jesus Gives Judas A Last Opportunity To Repent – Verses 21-25

21 And while they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.”**22** They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?” **23** Jesus replied, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. **24** The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.” **25** Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?” Jesus answered, “You have said so.”

26:21-22 Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me: In the midst of their Passover meal, Jesus made a startling announcement. He told His disciples that one of their own — these twelve who had lived and heard and learned from Jesus for three years — would betray Him. Jesus said this not to point out a specific disciple, because they all dipped with Him. Instead, Jesus identified the betrayer as a friend, someone who ate at the same table with Him.

26:25 Rabbi, is it I? It was noble for the 11 other disciples to ask this question (Lord, is it I?); it was terrible hypocrisy for Judas to ask it. For Judas to ask, “Rabbi, is it I?” while knowing he had already arranged the arrest of Jesus was the height of treachery. You have said it: Jesus did not say this to condemn Judas, but to call him to repentance. It is fair to assume that He said it with love in His eyes, and Jesus showed Judas that He loved him, even knowing his treachery.

Jesus Institutes The Lord’s Supper – Verses 26-29

26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” **27** Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. **28** This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. **29** I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

26:26 Each name we use for this sacrament brings out a different dimension to it. It is the Lord’s Supper because it commemorates the Passover meal Jesus ate with his disciples; it is the Eucharist (thanksgiving) because in it we thank God for Christ’s work for us; it is Communion because through it we commune with God and with other believers. As we eat the bread and drink the wine, we should be quietly reflective as we recall Jesus’ death and his promise to come again, grateful for God’s wonderful gift to us, and joyful as we meet with Christ and the body of believers.

26:28 How does Jesus’ blood relate to the new covenant? People under the old covenant (those who lived before Jesus) could approach God only through a priest and an animal sacrifice. Now all people can come directly to God through faith because Jesus’ death has made us acceptable in God’s eyes (Romans 3: 21-24). The old covenant was a shadow of the new (Jeremiah 31: 31; Hebrews 8: 1-13), pointing forward to the day when Jesus himself would be the final and ultimate sacrifice for sin. Rather than an unblemished lamb slain on the altar, the perfect Lamb of God was slain on the cross, a sinless sacrifice, so that our sins could be forgiven once and for all. All those who believe in Christ receive that forgiveness.

26:29 Again Jesus assured his disciples of victory over death and of their future with him. The next few hours would bring apparent defeat, but soon they would experience the power of the Holy Spirit and witness the great spread of the gospel message. And one day they would all be together again in God’s new kingdom.

Jesus sings with His disciples and goes out to the Mount of Olives – Verse 30

30 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

When they had sung a hymn: We don’t often think of Jesus singing, but He did. He lifted His voice in adoration and worship to God the Father. We can endlessly wonder what His voice sounded like, but we know for certain that He sang with more than His voice, and He lifted His whole heart up in praise. This reminds us that God wants to be praised with singing.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial – Verses 31-35

³¹ 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. ³² But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.” ³³ Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.” ³⁴ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” ³⁵ But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the other disciples said the same.

26:35 All the disciples declared that they would die before disowning Jesus. A few hours later, however, they all scattered. Talk is cheap. It is easy to say we are devoted to Christ, but our claims are meaningful only when they are tested in the crucible of persecution. How strong is your faith? Is it strong enough to stand up under intense trial?

Jesus Prayer In The Garden Of Gethsemane – Verses 36-39

³⁶ 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.” ³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” ³⁹ 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.”

26:37-38 Jesus was in great anguish over his approaching physical pain, separation from the Father, and death for the sins of the world. The divine course was set, but he, in his human nature, still struggled (Hebrews 5: 7-9). Because of the anguish Jesus experienced, he can relate to our suffering. Jesus' strength to obey came from his relationship with God the Father, who is also the source of our strength (John 17: 11, 15, 16, 21, 26).

26:39 Jesus was not rebelling against his Father's will when he asked that the cup of suffering and separation be taken away. In fact, he reaffirmed his desire to do God's will by saying, “Yet not as I will, but as you will.” His prayer reveals to us his terrible suffering. His agony was worse than death because he paid for all sin by being separated from God. The sinless Son of God took our sins upon himself to save us from suffering and separation.

26:39 In times of suffering people sometimes wish they knew the future, or they wish they could understand the reason for their anguish. Jesus knew what lay ahead of him, and he knew the reason. Even so, his struggle was intense— more wrenching than any struggle we will ever have to face. What does it take to be able to say “as you will”? It takes firm trust in God's plans; it takes prayer and obedience each step of the way.

Jesus Wins The Battle Of Prayer – Verses 40-46

⁴⁰ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. ⁴¹ “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ⁴² 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.” ⁴³ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. ⁴⁵ 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. ⁴⁶ Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

26:40-41 Jesus used Peter’s drowsiness to warn him about the kinds of temptation he would soon face. The way to overcome temptation is to keep alert and pray. Keeping alert means being aware of the possibilities of temptation, sensitive to the subtleties, and spiritually equipped to fight it. Because temptation strikes where we are most vulnerable, we can’t resist it alone. Prayer is essential because God’s strength can shore up our defenses and defeat Satan’s power.

Judas Betrays Jesus In The Garden Of Gethsemane – Verses 47-50

⁴⁷ 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. ⁴⁸ Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” ⁴⁹ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him. ⁵⁰ Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.” Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁵¹ 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.

26:48 Judas had told the crowd to arrest the man he kissed. This was not an arrest by Roman soldiers under Roman law but an arrest by the religious leaders. Judas pointed Jesus out, not because Jesus was hard to recognize, but because Judas had agreed to be the formal accuser in case a trial was called. Judas was able to lead the group to one of Jesus’ retreats, where no onlookers would interfere with the arrest.

26:51 The man who cut off the servant’s ear was Peter (John 18: 10). Peter was trying to prevent what he saw as defeat. He didn’t realize that Jesus had to die in order to gain victory. But Jesus demonstrated perfect commitment to his Father’s will. His kingdom would not be advanced with swords but with faith and obedience. Luke 22:51 records that Jesus then touched the servant’s ear and healed him.

The Arrest Of Jesus In Gethsemane – Verses 52-56

⁵² “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³ Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?” ⁵⁵ 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. ⁵⁶ But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

26:52-53 He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels: Had Jesus wanted Divine help at this moment, He could have had it. There were more than twelve legions of angels ready to come to His aid. “A legion is judged to be six thousand foot and seven hundred horse. And this great army of angels is by prayer dispatched from heaven in an instant.” The number is impressive, especially considering that one angel killed up to 185,000 soldiers in one night (2 Kings 19:35).

26:56 Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled: At this point, all the disciples scattered, running for their own safety. A few (Peter and John, at least) followed back to see what would happen at a distance. “We never know our hearts upon the prospect of great trials, until we come to grapple with them, and to be engaged in them. These disciples had all said they would not forsake him; when it comes to the push, not one of them stands by him.”

Jesus Is Taken To The Home Of Caiaphas – Verses 57-58

⁵⁷ Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. ⁵⁸ 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.

26:57 Earlier in the evening, Jesus had been questioned by Annas (the former high priest and the father-in-law of Caiaphas). Annas then sent Jesus to Caiaphas's home to be questioned (John 18: 12-24). Because of their haste to complete the trial and see Jesus die before the Sabbath, less than 24 hours away, the religious leaders met in Caiaphas's home at night instead of waiting for daylight and meeting in the temple.

The First Trial Before The Sanhedrin – Verses 59-61

⁵⁹ The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. ⁶⁰ But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward ⁶¹ and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

26:59 The Sanhedrin was the most powerful religious and political body of the Jewish people. Although the Romans controlled Israel's government, they gave the people power to handle religious disputes and some civil disputes, so the Sanhedrin made many of the local decisions affecting daily life. But a death sentence had to be approved by the Romans (John 18: 31).

26:60-61 The Sanhedrin tried to find witnesses who would distort some of Jesus' teachings. Finally, they found two witnesses who distorted Jesus' words about the temple (see John 2: 19). They claimed that Jesus had said he could destroy the temple— a blasphemous boast. Actually Jesus had said, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days” (John 2: 19). Jesus, of course, had been talking about his body, not the building. Ironically, the religious leaders were about to destroy Jesus' body just as he had said, and three days later he would rise from the dead.

Jesus testifies at His trial – Verses 62-64

⁶² 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?” ⁶³ 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.” ⁶⁴ “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.”

26:64 Jesus declared his royalty in no uncertain terms. In calling himself the Son of Man, Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah, as his listeners well knew. He knew this declaration would be his undoing, but he did not panic. He was calm, courageous, and determined.

The Sanhedrin React With Horror And Brutality – Verses 65-68

⁶⁵ 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. ⁶⁶ What do you think?” “He is worthy of death,” they answered. ⁶⁷ Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him ⁶⁸ and said, “Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?”

26:65-66 The high priest accused Jesus of blasphemy— calling himself God. To the Jews, this was a great crime, punishable by death (Leviticus 24: 16). The religious leaders refused even to consider that Jesus' words might be true. They had decided to kill Jesus, and in so doing, they sealed their own fate as well as his. Like the members of the Sanhedrin, you must decide whether Jesus' words are blasphemy or truth. Your decision has eternal implications.

Peter Disowns Jesus – Verses 69-75

69 Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said. **70** But he denied it before them all. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said. **71** 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.” **72** He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!” **73** After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.” **74** Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!” Immediately a rooster crowed. **75** 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.

26:69-75 There were three stages to Peter’s denial. First, he acted confused and tried to divert attention from himself by changing the subject. Second, using an oath he denied that he knew Jesus. Third, he swore that he did not know Jesus. Believers who deny Christ often begin doing so subtly by pretending not to know him. When opportunities to discuss religious issues come up, they walk away or pretend they don’t know the answers. With only a little more pressure, they can be induced to deny flatly their relationship with Christ. If you find yourself subtly diverting conversation so you don’t have to talk about Christ, watch out. You may be on the road to disowning him.

26:72-74 That Peter denied that he knew Jesus, using an oath and swearing, does not mean he used foul language. This was the kind of swearing that a person does in a court of law. Peter was swearing that he did not know Jesus and was invoking a curse on himself if his words were untrue. In effect he was saying, “May God strike me dead if I am lying.”

26:75 Peter remembered the word of Jesus...so he went out and wept bitterly: Peter finally remembered and took to heart what Jesus said, but in this case he did so too late. For now, all he could do was to weep bitterly. Yet Peter would be restored, showing a significant contrast between Judas (showing apostasy) and Peter (showing backsliding). Apostasy is giving up the truth, as Judas did. Judas was sorry about his sin, but it was not a sorrow leading to repentance. Backsliding is a decline from a spiritual experience once enjoyed. Peter slipped, but he will not fall; his bitter weeping will lead to repentance and restoration.