

Matthew

Bible Study

Final Days Matthew 26:1—19

Matthew 25 ended with Jesus filling in the Disciples on information they would need to take over Jesus' ministry by helping the Little Flock of believers to get through the Tribulation (John 16:1—4; 17:18). At this point, the Tribulation would happen perhaps within a year, at least according to the prophetic timeline. As we know now Israel's prophetic timeline was put on hold when Israel rejected the offer of the Kingdom (at the stoning of Stephen) and the Mystery program was introduced through the Apostle Paul.

Matthew 26 tells us that the feast of the Passover would begin within two days, which is the day that Jesus would be betrayed by Judas. The time is short but there are still many things that Jesus needed to accomplish.

The plot to kill Jesus (verses 3—5)

The desire to kill Jesus is now intensifying among the leaders of Israel. This goes back to Matthew 12 where the Pharisees were offended that Jesus healed a man with a withered hand and allowed His Disciples to pick grain on the Sabbath. Jesus was teaching them that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath and that He was Lord over the Sabbath. Verse 14 indicates the rage the leaders had toward Jesus for violating their man-made traditions (Matthew 15:2; Mark 7:5). Jesus is a huge threat to their position of power. Ironically, they thought their power over the people was retained by doing everything they could to retain a favorable image. In a sense, the people of Israel were dictating the actions of the leaders. They were terrified that the people would turn on them so they had to act underhandedly in putting a stop to Jesus so as not to offend them (John 11:48; Matthew 21:46; Luke 22:2).

As Passover approaches and Jesus' death is imminent the plotting to kill Jesus escalates. Various leaders tried to seize Jesus but failed (Luke 4:29—30; John 7:30, 44; 10:39). After Lazarus was brought back to life, they all came together to decide how they were going to get rid of Jesus permanently (John 11:53). The sad thing is that they would have been given the authority to rule the world for eternity if they had accepted Jesus as their Messiah. Those positions were taken away from them and given to the Disciples (Matthew 21:43; 19; 28).

Judas' plot to betray Jesus (verses 14—16; Mark 14:10—11; Luke 22:3—6)

The leaders of Israel were looking for a good way to take Jesus into custody without drawing the attention of the people to themselves. Jesus was almost always with the crowds unless He was privately teaching the Disciples or praying to the Father. It would be very beneficial for the leaders to know Jesus' whereabouts when He withdrew from the crowds, and who better able to do that than someone from the inside of Jesus' trusted inner circle.

Judas went to the Chief Priests knowing they were looking for a way to silence Jesus and thought this might be a good way to make some extra money. Judas was not a trustworthy person. He was the keeper of the treasury among the Disciples and would steal money from their moneybox (John 12:6). The religious leaders paid him 30 pieces of silver to deliver Jesus into their hands.

Two days before the Passover supper, Satan entered into Judas prompting him to strike a deal with the religious leaders to hand Jesus over to them. From this point on he was looking for an opportunity to deliver Jesus over to the authorities without interference from the crowds (Mark 14:10—11; Luke 22:1—6).

The anointing of Jesus (verses 6—13; Mark 14:3—9; Luke 7:36—50; John 12:1—8)

The Matthew and Mark accounts of Jesus being anointed chronicle the same event while Luke's account happened much earlier while John the Baptist was still alive. John, I believe, gives a third account of Jesus being anointed. If that's the case then Luke's account happened first followed by John's (about six days before Passover) then Matthew's and Mark's account two days before Passover.

This anointing happened in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper. Simon was obviously healed of his leprosy since he was not banished to stay outside the city gates. The woman was a known sinner who had believed that Jesus was the Messiah. She was visibly grateful for her sins being forgiven and demonstrated her great love for the Lord by spending a year's salary on the perfume.

This was a foretaste of Christ's forthcoming death. After dying, the body is wrapped and covered with spices. We see this happening after Jesus died when Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus to prepare it properly using a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes (John 19:38—40; Mark 15:45—16:1; Luke 23:49—56). It appears that this woman anointed Jesus just before Judas went to the religious leaders to profit from plotting against Jesus.

Preparation for Passover (verses 17—19; Mark 14:12—16; Luke 22:7—13)

Scripture often interchanges the Passover feast with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This is because they are tied together and celebrated as a single event along with the Feast of First Fruits. This is made plain in Luke 22:1 where Passover with Unleavened Bread are used interchangeably and in Ezekiel 45:21 where the feast of Unleavened Bread is called the Passover. These feasts last for one week beginning with Passover (Nisan 14) for one day followed by seven days of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 15—21). The Feast of Firstfruits was the day after the Sabbath following the Passover (first Sunday after Nisan 15). These Feasts were instituted by God in Exodus 12 (also see Leviticus 23) and commemorates Israel's escape from Egypt. It represents Christ's death (Passover) burial (Unleavened Bread) and resurrection (First Fruits).

Israel was commanded to celebrate this feast or face being cut off from Israel. This cutting off was a spiritual death sentence because the only way to God was through Israel (Exodus 12:15, 19).

It's interesting to see how much preparation was taken care of by Jesus as these three accounts are read. The Disciples were to enter the city and look for a man carrying a pitcher of water. They were to follow that man and enter the house he enters then speak to the owner of that house. They will find the owner has everything all set up for them to celebrate the Passover meal.

A contradiction?

There are a number of apparent contradictions in Scripture. Some are dispensational discrepancies while others are detail differences. An example of a dispensational contradiction is found when comparing James 2:17, 20, 24 that states that faith without works is dead and worthless, that a man is justified by works while Paul states in Romans 3:20 that no man will be justified by the works of the Law. Although these passages do contradict each other we can make sense of them by understand that they are directed to two different sets of people living in two different dispensational periods. James was written to the Jews who were scattered (James 1:1) who were under Law while Paul wrote to the Body of Christ who were saved under the Gospel of the Grace of God (Acts 20:24). They were required to demonstrate their faith through works while we are to demonstrate our faith by adding nothing to it.

One seeming discrepancy in details is found when comparing the synoptic Gospels with the book of John. According to Matthew 26:17—19 Jesus ate the Passover meal with the Disciples while John 19:14 says that Jesus was being tried on the day of preparation for the Passover. It appears that one account has Him eating Passover while the other has Him being tried. Both cannot be true.

The answer to this lies in understanding the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread (see above section) and in the reckoning of their days. It's generally well known that the Jewish day begins at sunset—around 6 p.m. Their Sabbath therefore begins Friday evening at 6 and ends Saturday evening. When John states that it was the day of preparation for the Passover he was actually referring to the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread. They needed to go through their houses to remove any leavening and get ready for the special Sabbath that occurs on the first and last days of the feast of Unleavened Bread. This preparation day would be the day after Jesus ate the Passover meal with the Disciples making both Matthew and John agree with each other.

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