

Studies in the Gospel of Matthew #71

Preparing for Christ's Death

Matt 26:1-16

Introduction:

1. [Chapt 26](#) begins the last and most pivotal section of Matthew's presentation of the gospel.
 - a. Everything else has led up to the cross of Jesus Christ—the culmination of the gospel and the culmination of redemptive history
 - b. Everything in the sacred 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.
 - c. There is no salvation, no gospel, no biblical Christianity apart from the cross of Christ.
2. In the deepest sense, all OT truth and history point unerringly to the cross
3. Above all else, the Christian gospel is the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that is the dominant and supreme focus of both testaments, the Old as well as the New.
4. Here for the fourth and last time He told them of His inevitable death, which would occur only two days hence ([26:2](#)).
5. The crucifixion itself was the next major event in Messiah's mission.
6. Before He should return in glory and power He must die in willing and humble submission to His Father's plan.

I. The Preparation of Sovereign Grace – vs 2

1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, 2 Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

A. Prep of the Disciples

1. As already noted, Jesus had predicted at least 3x previously that He would suffer to the death but would rise again.
2. He had even indicated that His death would be in Jerusalem and that He would rise on the third day.
3. He was on a divine timetable, and no human plans or power could cause that timetable to vary in a single detail.
 - a) *Joh 10:18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*
 - b) *Joh 19:10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? 11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.*
 - c) *Joh 5:18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.*
4. The first attempt on Jesus' life was made shortly after He was born, when Herod massacred all the male infants in the vicinity of Bethleh
5. On one occasion, ministering in a synagogue of Nazareth, the people became incensed by His claim to be fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy. They took Him to the edge of a high cliff on the outskirts of the city but before they could throw Him to His death, He miraculously passed through their midst and went His way ([Luke 4:16-30](#)).
6. After Jesus healed the crippled man at the pool of Bethesda, the Jewish leaders began "seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" ([John 5:18](#)).
7. All of those attempts to kill Jesus failed because it was not God's time or God's way for the Son to die.
8. Only the grace of God could have brought Jesus to the cross

BYZ **Matthew 26:1** Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πάντας τοὺς λόγους τούτους, εἶπεν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ,

BYZ **Matthew 26:2** Οἴδατε ὅτι μετὰ δύο ἡμέρας τὸ Πάσχα γίνεται, καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται εἰς τὸ σταυρωθῆναι.

Is delivered up (paradidotai). Another instance of the futuristic present passive indicative. The same form occurs in Matthew 26:24. Thus Jesus sets a definite date for the coming crucifixion which he has been predicting for six months.

B. Passover in the Prep

1. The appropriate time for Jesus to die was at **Passover**, when the sacrificial lambs were slain, because that celebration pointed to "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" ([John 1:29](#)).
2. The sacrifices of all the other lambs were but faint symbols of what the true Lamb was soon to accomplish in reality.
3. As Philip explained to the Ethiopian, Jesus was the Lamb predicted by Isaiah, led to slaughter but not opening His mouth ([Acts 8:32-34](#)).

C. Particulars in the Prep

1. Now Jesus knew it was the Father's time for Him to die, and He not only declared again that He must suffer and be crucified but specified that His death was only **a few days** away at the beginning of **the Passover**.
2. At that divinely appointed time **the Son of Man** would be **delivered up for crucifixion**.
3. Unbelieving skeptics have long tried to explain Jesus' death as a quirk of fate, the unintended termination of a well-meaning revolution that was discovered and crushed or the sad end to the delusions of a madman.
4. Others picture Jesus as a visionary whose dreams were ahead of the age in which He lived, or as a prophet who overstated His claims and thereby roused the ire of the religious establishment.
5. But such assertions do not square with the gospel accounts and are blasphemous.

II. The Preparation of Hateful Rejection – vs 3-5

3 Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, 4 And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. 5 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

A. Elders and Chief Priests

1. As Jesus was speaking to His disciples, the Sanhedrin, composed primarily of **the chief priests and the elders of the people**, was **gathered together in the court** of the palace of **the high priest, named Caiaphas**.
2. The **chief priests** represented the wealthy /influential religious nobilit
3. **The elders** represented the wealthy and influential lay nobility.
4. Scribes were present when Jesus was taken to Caiaphas's house after He was arrested ([Matt. 26:57](#)), and it is likely that some of them were also there at this time.

B. Caiaphas

1. According to the famous Jewish historian Josephus, the full name of the **high priest** was Joseph **Caiaphas**.
 - a) *He was a conniving, treacherous, and deceitful man depicted in Scripture in the one-dimensional role of Jesus' antagonist.*
 - b) *In every passage where he is mentioned, he is seen pursuing the destruction of Jesus.*
 - c) *Like Herod, his hatred and fear of Jesus was not theological but political.*
 - d) *Caiaphas wanted to destroy Jesus because he feared that He posed a serious threat to his position / power over the Jewish people.*
 - e) *Driven purely by greed and selfish, jealous ambition, he had no sense of justice, righteousness, or propriety.*
 - f) *He had no regard for his country his people, or his religion, except as those could be used to personal advantage. His basic operating principle was expediency epitomized for all time in his infamous declaration: "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish" ([John 11:50](#)).*

BYZ **Matthew 26:3** Τότε συνήχθησαν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ εἰς τὴν αὐλὴν τοῦ ἀρχιερέως τοῦ λεγομένου Καϊάφα,

Unto the court (eis tēn aulēn). The atrium or court around which the palace buildings were built. Here in this open court this informal meeting was held. Caiaphas was high priest A.D. 18 to 36. His father-in-law Annas had been high priest A.D. 6 to 15 and was still called high priest by many.

BYZ **Matthew 26:4** καὶ συνεβουλεύσαντο ἵνα τὸν Ἰησοῦν δόλω κρατήσωσιν καὶ ἀποκτείνωσιν.

They took counsel together (sunebouleusanto). Aorist middle indicative, indicating their puzzled state of mind. They have had no trouble in finding Jesus (John 11:57). Their problem now is how to take Jesus by subtilty and kill him (hina ton Iēsoun dolōi kratēsōsin kai apokteinōsin). The Triumphal Entry and the Tuesday debate in the temple revealed the powerful following that Jesus had among the crowds from Galilee.

BYZ **Matthew 26:5** Ἐλεγον δέ, Μὴ ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ, ἵνα μὴ θόρυβος γένηται ἐν τῷ λαῷ.

A tumult (thorubos). They feared the uprising in behalf of Jesus and were arguing that the matter must be postponed till after the feast was over when the crowds had scattered. Then they could catch him "by craft" (dolōi) as they would trap a wild beast.

2. The high priesthood traditionally was passed on through the Levitical line, but during the Roman occupation the position generally was sold or bestowed as a political favor.
 - a) *Caiaphas served as high priest from A.D. 15 to 37, an unparalleled tenure.*
 - b) *To hold the office for that long required a close relationship with Rome, and over the period of some hundred years - Caiaphas's successor lasted only 50 days in office.*
3. **Caiaphas** was the epitome of the decadent religious system
 - a) *Wicked as he was, he alone could enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement and offer the sacrifice.*
 - b) *He supervised all the priestly functions in the Temple and profited from the merchandising there that had so incensed Jesus that He twice drove out the money changers and sellers of sacrificial animals ([John 2:14-16](#); [Matt. 21:12-13](#)).*

C. Purpose

1. The Sanhedrin had assembled in Caiaphas's house for one purpose: to plot how they could **seize Jesus**.
2. They wanted to do it **by stealth** in order not to antagonize the masses in the city where Jesus was popular; and once they had Him firmly in their grasp they would then **kill Him** when it seemed propitious.
3. They had endured more of Him than they could tolerate and were determined to put an end to His exposure of their hypocrisy and ungodliness and His threat to their power and wealth.
4. Apparently they planned to arrest Him as soon as possible, before He had opportunity to escape or amass further support among the people.
5. He would then be held in custody until the Passover crowds had left Jerusalem, making it safer to put Him to death, perhaps also in secret. Therefore **they were saying, "Not during the festival."**

D. Prohibition

1. From the standpoint of the Jewish leaders, therefore, Passover was the worst possible time for them to take direct action against Jesus, especially to put Him to death.
 - a) *They feared it would surely cause a riot... among the people.*
 - b) *But Passover was the time God had chosen, and those hateful rejecters would crucify Jesus according to God's plan rather than their own.*
2. When they wanted to postpone putting Him to death, they could not.
3. When, by God's sovereign allowance, Jesus' enemies finally succeeded in putting Him to death, it was at the very time they most wanted to avoid.

III. The Preparation of Loving Worship – vs 6-13

A. Place of the Anointing

6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

1. Matthew here presents a flashback to the previous Saturday when Jesus came into the area of **Bethany** and Bethphage
2. In this touching acct, a third preparation for Jesus' crucifixion is seen
3. It is in stark contrast to that of the Sanhedrin, reflecting loving worship rather than hateful rejection.
4. While in **Bethany** Jesus and the disciples were invited to **the home of Simon the leper** for supper.
5. From John's account we learn that Mary; Martha, and Lazarus were also present and that Martha served the meal
6. Since a **leper** was not allowed to live in towns or cities or to associate with nonlepers, it is clear that **Simon** had been cleansed.
 - a) *And because that dread disease was incurable by medical means, he apparently had been healed miraculously by Jesus.*
 - b) *In deep gratitude for that deliverance, he had asked Jesus and the others to his house for a meal.*

BYZ **Matthew 26:6** Τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ
γενομένου ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ἐν οἰκίᾳ
Σίμωνος τοῦ λεπροῦ,

In the house of Simon the leper (en oikiāi Simōnos tou leproū). Evidently a man who had been healed of his leprosy by Jesus who gave the feast in honour of Jesus. All sorts of fantastic theories have arisen about it. Some even identify this Simon with the one in Luke 7:36ff., but Simon was a very common name and the details are very different. Some hold that it was Martha's house because she served (John 12:2) and that Simon was either the father or husband of Martha, but Martha loved to serve and that proves nothing. Some identify Mary of Bethany with the sinful woman in Luke 7 and even with Mary Magdalene, both gratuitous and groundless propositions. For the proof that Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalene, and the sinful woman of Luke 7 are all distinct see my Some Minor Characters in the New Testament. John (John 12:1) apparently locates the feast six days before the passover, while Mark (Mark 14:3) and Matthew (Matthew 26:6) seem to place it on the Tuesday evening (Jewish Wednesday) just two days before the passover meal. It is possible that John anticipates the date and notes the feast at Bethany at this time because he does not refer to Bethany again. If not, the order of Mark must be followed. According to the order of Mark and Matthew, this feast took place at the very time that the Sanhedrin was plotting about the death of Jesus (Mark 14:1-2).

B. Person in the Anointing

7 There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

1. During the supper a **woman**, whom Matthew does not identify but John tells us was Mary ([12:3](#)), **came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it upon His head as He reclined at the table.**
2. From Mark we learn that the very costly perfume was worth "over three hundred denarii," 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](#)).
3. Mary had always been specially attentive to the Lord's teaching (see [Luke 10:39](#)), and it seems that on this occasion she accepted the reality and understood the significance of Jesus' impending death better than the Twelve.
 - a) *She may have sensed that in His tragic death somehow lay her redemption.*
 - b) *She understood what the disciples did not want to understand, that Jesus had to die in order to be raised again.*
 - c) *Unlike them, she was not caught up in the carnal, selfish desire for Christ to establish His earthly kingdom immediately in order to share in the glory and privilege that event would bring.*
4. In an act of unmeasured love, Mary **poured** the perfume **upon His head as He reclined at the table.**
 - a) *The perfume was a pound of pure nard, John tells us, which she also used to anoint Jesus' feet ([John 12:3](#)).*
 - b) *In that adoring testimony of love and honor Mary poured out her soul in worship even as she poured out the perfume.*
 - c) *Being absolutely controlled by adoration for her Lord, she lost all sense of restraint and economy.*
5. Without hesitation offered her most expensive earthly possession to the Lord in an act of effusive, adoring worship.

C. Purpose of the Anointing

12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

1. In this particular and unique act of worship, when Mary **poured this perfume upon Jesus' body**, without her even realizing it **she did it to prepare Him for burial.**
2. It became a symbolic deed that anticipated His death and burial.

D. The Problem in the Anointing

8 But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? 9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

1. Having no comprehension of what prompted Mary to do what she was doing, the insensitive **disciples were indignant when they saw this, and** piously asked, "**Why this waste?**"
2. At the instigation of the traitorous Judas (see [John 12:4-5](#)) they suggested that the "**perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor.**"
3. Because Judas was treasurer of the group and also a thief, he no doubt would have embezzled most of the money for himself (see [John 12:6](#)).
4. Now that he was totally disillusioned with Jesus, he probably felt even more justified in stealing whatever he could before going his own way.
5. Although the disciples' indignation was not voiced openly but only among themselves ([Mark 14:4](#)) and to Mary, **Jesus was aware of this** and rebuked them for it.

BYZ **Matthew 26:7** προσῆλθεν αὐτῷ γυνὴ ἀλάβαστρον μύρου ἔχουσα βαρυτίμου, καὶ κατέχεεν ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ ἀνακειμένου.

An alabaster cruse of exceeding precious ointment (alabastron murou barutimou). The flask was of alabaster, a carbonate of lime or sulphate of lime, white or yellow stone, named alabaster from the town in Egypt where it was chiefly found. It was used for a phial employed for precious ointments in ancient writers, inscriptions and papyri just as we speak of a glass for the vessel made of glass. It had a cylindrical form at the top, as a rule, like a closed rosebud (Pliny). Matthew does not say what the ointment (murou) was, only saying that it was "exceeding precious" (barutimou), of weighty value, selling at a great price. Here only in the N.T. "An alabaster of nard (murou) was a present for a king" (Bruce). It was one of five presents sent by Cambyses to the King of Ethiopia (Herodotus, iii. 20).

She poured it upon his head (katecheen epi tēs kephalēs autou). So Mark (Mark 14:3), while John (John 12:3) says that she "anointed the feet of Jesus." Why not both? The verb katecheen is literally to pour down. It is the first aorist active indicative, unusual form.

BYZ **Matthew 26:8** Ἰδόντες δὲ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἠγανάκτησαν, λέγοντες, εἰς τί ἡ ἀπόλεια αὐτῆ;

This waste (hē apōleia hautē). Dead loss (apōleia) they considered it, nothing but sentimental aroma. It was a cruel shock to Mary of Bethany to hear this comment. Matthew does not tell as John does (John 12:4) that it was Judas who made the point which the rest endorsed. Mark explains that they mentioned "three hundred pence," while Matthew (Matthew 26:9) only says "for much" (pollou).

BYZ **Matthew 26:9** Ἠδύνατο γὰρ τοῦτο τὸ μύρον πρᾶθῆναι πολλοῦ, καὶ δοθῆναι πτωχοῖς.

E. The Praise in the Anointing

10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

1. Genuine worship is the supreme service a Christian offers to Christ
2. There is a time for ministering to the poor, the sick, the naked, and the imprisoned.
3. There is a time for witnessing to the lost and seeking to lead them to the Savior.
4. There is a time for discipling new believers and helping them grow in the faith.
5. There is a time for careful study and teaching of God's Word.
6. But above all else that the Lord requires of His people is their true worship, without which everything else they may do in His name is empty and powerless.

F. The Proclamation in the Anointing

13 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

1. What Mary did was of such lasting significance that Jesus declared
2. Through the accounts of this story in 3 of the gospels, the Holy Spirit secured for posterity a memorial to her love and generous worship.
3. In fulfillment of the Lord's prediction, for nearly two thousand years **what this woman** did has indeed been **spoken of in memory of her**.
4. She is an example to all Christians of unselfish, sacrificial adoration.

IV. The Preparation of Betraying Hypocrisy – vs 14-16

14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, 15 And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. 16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

A. The Individual

1. In contrast to Mary, who gave an open testimony of loving worship, **Judas Iscariot** gave clandestine testimony of betraying hypocrisy.

B. The Initiative

1. Going **to the chief priests**, probably while they were still assembled in Caiaphas's house, Judas asked callously, "**What are you willing to give me to deliver Him up to you?**"

C. The Income

1. No doubt pleasantly amazed that one of Jesus' own disciples would be the means of their destroying Him, the religious leaders eagerly **weighed out to Judas thirty pieces of silver**.
2. For the price of a slave (see [Ex. 21:32](#)), Judas not only sold out his teacher and leader and friend but betrayed the very Son of God, who had come to be his Savior.

D. The Intensity

1. Having irrevocably committed himself to the treachery, **from then on**, Judas **began looking for a good opportunity to betray** the Lord.
2. In the eyes of Jesus' enemies, the **good opportunity** would be when He was "apart from the multitude" ([Luke 22:6](#)), as He soon would be in the Garden of Gethsemane.
3. 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.
4. And the Lord forever turned His back on Judas.

BYZ **Matthew 26:10** Γνοὺς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Τί κόπους παρέχετε τῇ γυναικί; Ἔργον γὰρ καλὸν εἰργάσατο εἰς ἐμέ.

Why trouble ye the woman? A phrase not common in Greek writers, though two examples occur in the papyri for giving trouble. *Kopos* is from *koptō*, to beat, smite, cut. It is a beating, trouble, and often work, toil. Jesus champions Mary's act with this striking phrase.

11 Πάντοτε γὰρ τοὺς πτωχοὺς ἔχετε μεθ' ἑαυτῶν, ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε. **12** Βαλοῦσα γὰρ αὕτη τὸ μύρον τοῦτο ἐπὶ τοῦ σώματός μου, πρὸς τὸ ἐνταφιάσαι με ἐποίησεν.

To prepare me for burial Mary alone had understood what Jesus had repeatedly said about his approaching death. The disciples were so wrapped up in their own notions of a political kingdom that they failed utterly to sympathize with Jesus as he faced the cross. But Mary with the woman's fine intuitions did begin to understand and this was her way of expressing her high emotions and loyalty. The word here is the same used in John 19:40 about what Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus did for the body of Jesus before burial with the addition of *pros* to showing the purpose of Mary (the infinitive of purpose). Mary was vindicated by Jesus and her noble deed has become a "memorial of her" (*eis mnēmosumon autēs*) as well as of Jesus.

13 Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅπου ἐὰν κηρυχθῇ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦτο ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ, λαληθήσεται καὶ ὁ ἐποίησεν αὕτη, εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς. **14** Τότε πορευθεὶς εἰς τῶν δώδεκα, ὁ λεγόμενος Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώτης, πρὸς τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς,