

BIBLE STUDY

The Life of Jesus Christ

The Last Supper and Jesus Trial and Crucifixion

Study Section 11



Jesus Christ: Part 24

The Last Supper

The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, the adulation of the crowd, the bitter defeat that the leaders of Israel suffered in debate with Jesus, all these factors fanned the hatred and murderous intent with which they viewed Him. Everything and anything must be done to secure His death, but in such a way as to free them from guilt and make Him appear to be a criminal properly condemned. This would satisfy the public conscience. It was against a background of threatening violence and betrayal that Jesus gave final instructions to His Disciples, planned His last supper with them, and instituted the Memorial Service.

Preparation for Murder - Matthew 26:1-5

When Jesus left the Temple on the 12th day of Abib, just days before He died, His public preaching had ended. (Matthew 24:1-2) The following day was the 13th day of Abib, which He spent with His Disciples, instructing them by Prophecy, by Parable and by Word, regarding what lay immediately before them. (Matthew 24 and 25)

In the course of this instruction, He provided them with a set of standards relative to judgment in the great day of His return. If we want to be present day Disciples of Christ, then we should pay attention to all of the instructions that He taught during this period with them. The practical standards entailed in the judgment should never be overlooked in our assessment of ourselves. (Matthew 25:31-46) At the conclusion of these teachings, He told them of His impending death;

“You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion.” Matthew 26:2

Caiaphas, the High Priest, had called together a representative group of Jewish Leaders who had one common thought. Jesus Christ must be condemned and killed. They had certain problems. It was necessary to be done quickly, but they were concerned that there might be a public riot if it were done on the Feast Day. Time was running against them. They had less than 2 days left to secure their purpose.

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(Matt. 26:3-5) It was also necessary to determine His whereabouts in order to select an opportune time and place to arrest Him. They must also ensure His guilt on a charge that would be legally acceptable.

This latter part was a very real dilemma, for Jesus' character and conduct were flawless, both in regard to Jewish and Roman law. This was a real difficulty, for it would be necessary to have Rome condemn Him as well as the Jews. Stoning would not necessarily have discredited Him in all Jewish eyes. Crucifixion, under Roman law, would carry with it the weight of the Jewish law that said "that he that is hanged on a tree is accursed of God." (Deut. 21:23)

Betrayal - Matthew 26:6-16

We should note that from the moment that Mary anointed Jesus at Bethany, on the eve of His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Judas Iscariot had gone to the Chief Priests to conspire with them to betray Him. From that point forward Judas had sought occasion to deliver Him into their hands. (Matthew 26:14-16) In Matthew, chapter 26, Mary's anointing of Jesus (verses 6-13), is placed out of chronological sequence in order to explain the action and motives of Judas Iscariot. The correct time setting is seen in John 12:1-7.

When Jesus said that the Son of Man is to be delivered up (betrayed) to be crucified, (verse 2), the agreement had already been made. Judas was to receive a token payment of 30 pieces of silver for his part. This appears to be an insignificant amount considering the gravity of his deed and the degree of hatred felt by the Religious Leaders. Once again, however, the consistency of God's Word shines through, for the amount carries significance as a Bible echo. It was the price of a slave. Under the law, if an ox gored another man's slave, the owner of the ox paid the other man 30 pieces of silver. (Exodus 21:32)

In this Bible echo, Jesus was the slave, the "righteous servant" of God. (Isaiah 53:11) We find the same comparison in Isaiah 52:13. Additionally, Isaiah chapter 42, verse 1, provides a clear identification with Jesus in this manner, as a prophecy is given regarding the Messiah to come:

"Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; my chosen One in whom my soul delights. I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations."

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The “man” and his “ox” were represented by the Jews and their leaders, “bulls of Bashan.” (Psalm 22:12-16) As an echo, Psalm 22, can be clearly identified with the whole sequence of events that was to take place over the next several days. This Psalm prophetically describes crucifixion, a means of execution not known until Roman times. This whole action was prophesied:

“And I said to them, if it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind! So they weighed out 30 shekels of silver as my wages. Then the Lord said to me, throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them. So I took the 30 shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the House of the Lord.” Zechariah 11: 12,13

As we consider this prophecy, we must once again be filled with awe over the fulfillment of the details revealed in God’s Word. Subsequent to the betrayal, Judas felt remorse over what he had done and tried to return the 30 pieces of silver to the Chief Priests and Elders. They refused to accept it because it was blood money. So Judas *threw the 30 pieces of silver into the Sanctuary of the House of the Lord.* (Matthew 27:3-5)

All this meaning and these echoes out of the Scriptures come flooding through to us in the simple reference to the price of betrayal paid to Judas. Until Judas interrupted the High Priests’ proceedings, the question of a specific charge against Jesus remained open. His intervention is recorded in Luke 22:3-6, where he fully consented to helping them in their plans.

From the question that Caiaphas subsequently asked Jesus at His trial before the Sanhedrin, it appears that Judas betrayed the trust Jesus imposed on the Disciples regarding His identity. Simon Peter had stated: “...*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” Matthew 16:16

After confirming it, Jesus then warned the Disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ. (Matthew 16:20) It was this question of His identity around which Caiaphas built the case against Jesus. False witnesses had been unsuccessful, so the High Priest asked Jesus directly:

“...I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God.” Matthew 26:63

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Peter's declaration and Caiaphas' question were based on Psalm 2:2, 7, wherein the One destined to lead Israel to victory over the Gentiles was described as God's "anointed," (i.e. Messiah, or Christ), and as His "Son." For one to call himself God's actual Son was blasphemy to a Jew and warranted stoning. But to say that He was to conquer the Gentiles could be treason to a Roman, because it was a direct threat to Caesar.

By the time Judas left the elders to resume his place with the Twelve, Caiaphas had cause to be well satisfied. He had all the necessary information with which to press a charge and at the appropriate moment, with Judas' assistance, Jesus would be quietly arrested.

Preparation for Sacrifice - Matthew 26:17-19

When the time of Passover drew near, Jesus determined to eat the Passover with His Disciples. Judas doubtless hoped to lead the elders of the Jews to the seclusion of this private room, and betray Him in the absence of the multitude. But Jesus knew of Judas' plans. He had already said to the twelve, "one of you is a devil." He would not allow His final hours with His Disciples to be cut short. Jesus sent Peter and John into the city, to prepare the room or guest-chamber. The directions to the house involved, or its precise location, were not disclosed. Instead, apparently to withhold this knowledge from Judas, Peter and John were told to find and follow "a man bearing a pitcher of water." (Mark 14:13) In Jesus' day, women did that work, so the sight of a man doing it would be very unusual. Thus it served an effective purpose in withholding knowledge from Judas and ensuring that Jesus would not be betrayed until His time had fully come.

What Jesus was about to do was a token of His impending sacrifice, and it was essential that everything be done as the Law of God concerning the Passover required it. His Disciples were told to "make ready the Passover." As part of the preparation for the Passover, the Disciples would have to remove all leaven. This removing of the leaven was symbolic of removing from themselves all "malice and wickedness." (1 Cor.5:8)

Thus, symbolically purged from within, the Disciples would be prepared for God's teaching and admonition. This personal inner striving to cleanse the thoughts and attitudes of the heart is something that, in our case as well, needs to be kept continually in mind. (Compare Matthew 5:23, 24) Though complete cleansing of course can only come through Jesus Christ and not through our own efforts.

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The Upper Room - Matthew 26:20-25; Luke 22:15-18

With everything being prepared, the Lamb of God went into the city for the Passover. After this week, the work of the Priests would be finished. The Law would be at an end. The righteousness of God would be revealed. Through Christ Himself, believing men and women would find salvation.

By the time Christ sat down with the twelve, the evening had come. (Matt. 26:20) The 14th day of Abib, which was from “evening to evening,” had arrived. He had less than 24 hours to live. With the coming of day, in common with the Passover lamb slain “between the two evenings,” (Exodus 12:6), i.e. between 3-6 p.m., Jesus would be slain.

The day after, the 15th of Abib, Israel would keep the Feast commanded by the Law. The supper Jesus now kept with His Apostles anticipated the Spiritual significance for which the Passover stood. He said:

“...I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” Luke 22:15

A meal shared among those who are closely bonded is a joyful experience. The Disciples probably misunderstood Jesus’ reference to suffering, for He went on to say:

“...I shall never eat it again until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.” Luke 22:16

Of the wine served after supper, He stated:

“...I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until now on until the Kingdom of God comes.” Luke 22:18

The Memorial Meeting with its emblems of bread and wine was not instituted until after the meal had ended. (Luke 22:19, 20) Before this transpired, there were further important lessons to communicate to the Disciples. The first lesson concerned service as the pathway which they must follow.

When Jesus said He would neither eat nor drink of the Passover until the Kingdom came, they probably understood it to mean that the Kingdom was near at hand. They commenced arguing as to who of them would be the greatest in God’s Kingdom. (Luke 22:24-27)

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Their unseemly quarrel for precedence gave their Master the opportunity to administer a most gracious rebuke and to reveal the true nature and depth of His Father's love. He arose from the table, wrapped a towel around Him, and taking a bowl of water proceeded to wash the feet of the Twelve. In this way He fulfilled the office of the most humble slave. (John 13:4-16; 1 Sam. 25:41)

Not one of them had been prepared to serve each other in this manner. Jesus taught the Disciples a valuable lesson in the selfless service that God requires of a Disciple as a prerequisite for being raised to honour. (Compare Philippians 2:6-9)

History demonstrates that human nature's conception of power is one of glory, power and high status, yet this is in direct opposition to humility and service. In revealing His love to man, God shows how false such a conception is. He sent His Son for the salvation of man. We look for a revelation of glory and power, but instead we find a man of sorrows and one acquainted with grief.

We anticipate the fiery judgment of heaven upon a faithless people, but instead we see the gentle touch of healing. We look for denunciation of a traitor, but instead we see the Saviour kneeling at His feet with water and towel.

One by one the Disciples submitted to His ministrations. Through submitting, they learned the nature of their vocation.

Only Peter protested. But Jesus gently showed His impulsive Disciple that before he could do anything before his Lord, he must suffer his Lord to minister to him and cleanse the impurities from his robust, but earthly heart. We must learn that lesson as well.

Jesus completed His object lesson by explaining the significance of His actions: "***You call Me teacher and Lord; ... if I then, the Lord and the teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.***" *John 13:13,14*

We cannot minister until we have been ministered unto by our Lord. But when we have received His ministry, ours becomes imperative. The love that is poured forth from Him into our lives is too great to remain there without flowing also into the lives of others.

The next lesson concerned self-examination. Jesus suggested that one of them was a traitor. They were upset and puzzled, all asking the inevitable: "***...Surely not I, Lord?***" *Matthew 26:22*

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That is, all except Judas Iscariot. They were all intent upon examining their own hearts to discover if there was some hint of a betrayal within themselves. Their deep grieving at His suggestion provides indication of a desire to root out this possibility if they found it.

For the moment, Judas held back. It was not until Jesus pronounced doom upon His betrayer, (Matthew 26:24), that he could be provoked to say: “...***Surely it is not I, Rabbi?...***” ***Matthew 26:25***

In asking this question, the other eleven had referred to Jesus as “Lord,” thereby indicating that Jesus was their “owner” or “ruler.” Judas called Him “Rabbi,” reducing His status to that of a mere “teacher.” Jesus replied in the affirmative. Yes it was he. His remark appears to have been lost on the others who were intent upon self-examination, and Judas himself by this time had reached the stage where it was almost impossible to retract his position. Thus Judas the betrayer departed into the night.

The Memorial Feast - Matt.26:26-30; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25

It is a simple ceremony left on record for us to keep in order that we might remember the principles involved in the sacrifice of our Lord. The Disciples had received lessons in Discipleship. They had been exhorted to humility by the Lord. (John 13:12-17) They had been provoked to examine their own personal standing. It is then recorded that Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and handed it to His Disciples saying: “...***Take, eat; this is My Body.***” ***Matthew 26:26***

The bread represented a body about to be crucified. To eat such “bread” is to absorb, and so reflect, the spirit of sacrifice of which it speaks. To partake of it is to agree to the need for a voluntary denial or crucifixion of the flesh. As Jesus denied the impulses of the flesh, in order that He might not sin against God, in the same way it must also be the goal of His Disciples: “***Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.***” ***Galatians 5:24***

We are then told that Jesus took the cup of wine and gave thanks, distributing it among His Disciples: “...***Drink from it, all of you; For this is My Blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.***” ***Matthew 26:27, 28***

The significance of this “blood” poured out for the forgiveness of sins, is a Bible echo from Leviticus, chapter 17, verses 10 and 11. The life of the flesh is in the blood. The blood was to be poured out on the altar to make atonement. This Law regarding

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blood was a direct foreshadowing of the blood of Christ poured out in order to make atonement for our sins. His life poured out in total dedication.

Thus the emblems represent, on the one hand, a voluntary repudiation or denunciation of the flesh, that is human nature, and on the other hand, a total dedication to the things of God. At the same time, they recognized the unique position occupied by the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is the One through whom these principles found the perfect expression. It is to emulate His example that God's children are told "do this in remembrance of Me," as Paul recorded in his letter to the Corinthians, in which he confirmed the following of this Memorial practice. (1 Cor. 11:23-25)

An Hour is Coming - John 13:31 through John 17

The time was getting very near now. A few brief hours stood between this quiet time with the Disciples and the arrest of Jesus by the Temple police. Jesus reminded them of this inevitable separation and spoke the words of comfort and instruction which have been preserved for us in the Gospel of John. The depth and meaning of these final words of Jesus in this upper room provide a study in themselves for each one of us. They conclude with Jesus' prayer on behalf of His Disciples. John's record confirms that these final words of instruction, and this wonderfully comforting prayer, are not just intended for the 11 who now remained with Him in that room. They are for all those who would follow a life of dedication to Him until the day of His return to this earth.

In brief summary, in this study, we can only touch on the highlights of these precious words from Jesus. He began by giving them the new commandment to love one another. This love to be manifested was new because it was to be "as I have loved you." Such love had never been revealed before, but now it must be perpetuated in the lives of the Disciples.

We find the record of Jesus' gentle discussion with Peter. This impetuous Apostle was about to fall in the face of trial. But Jesus had prayed for him, and he would emerge from this greatest lesson of his life, blinded by scalding tears, but with a faith that he had never known before. It was necessary for Peter to fail at the point of his greatest human strength - his loyalty to his Lord. He had to learn that his confidence must be in God, not in his own virtue. Of himself he could do nothing. Only in Christ were all things possible and this is a lesson that we all need to learn.

Jesus turned from Peter's difficulties to the needs of all the Disciples, offering words of encouragement and comfort that would be necessary in the face of trials that they

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were yet to endure on His behalf. He promised them the strength and comfort of the Spirit and the reward of endurance for those who would keep His words through sustained prayer and steady dedication.

Finally Jesus bequeathed to them His peace. This was not simply the freedom from strife which is all that the world can give. This peace of mind is the deep abiding quietness of spirit which finds its source in complete trust in God. This is a peace which sustains us through all the stresses and trials of life. It is sustained through prayer and fed by the knowledge that all things, whether good or evil, are working together for good. Thus Jesus knowing that the activities and events of the next few hours would frighten, demoralize and scatter them, He concluded with the assurance of a final victory:

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

LESSON FOR US

There are many, many lessons that could be taken from the records of the time spent in that upper room. We see the need for self-examination, recognition of the love that Jesus extends towards His followers, the need for all His Disciples to follow His example of loving humility and service. These and many other lessons can be extracted from this record. But apart from any other lessons, we can look to the need for, and assurance from, personal dedication to be found in the final moments before leaving for Gethsemane.

He desired finally to dedicate Himself to His Father’s will and to commit His loved ones to His Father’s keeping. He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and for their benefit, spoke aloud the Holy prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. It is a prayer to meditate upon with deep humility and gratitude. “Father, the hour is come. Glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may also glorify Thee...I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.”

His thoughts then turned toward His Disciples. They belonged to God, but the Father had given them to His Son to be perfected and sanctified, and now, His work completed, He once more committed them to the love and care of God. “Sanctify

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them with Thy truth. Thy word is truth.” He implored His Father that they might enter into that Holy relationship which marked His perfect union with the Father. “I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me.”

He prayed for the consummation of His Father’s purpose, that they might be with Him and behold His glory.

We feel the earnest pleading of His prayer as He leaves them tenderly and confidently in His Father’s keeping, as He goes away from them to face the full impact of men’s malice and wickedness. “O righteous Father, although the world has not known Thee, yet I have known Thee; and these have known that Thou didst send Me; and I have made Thy Name known to them and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them.”

We take our final lesson from this prayer in the assurance that Jesus intended it for each one of us who chooses to follow Him in faith and truth, and desires to become one with Him and His Father.

“And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in me through their word;” John 17:19-20

Test Yourself

1. Briefly discuss what took place at the ‘Last Supper’.
2. How and why did Judas betray Jesus?
3. Describe some of the events that took place when Jesus was crucified.

Jesus Christ: Part 25

Trial and Crucifixion

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The most momentous scene in the history of the human race is now recorded in the four Gospels. Before Jesus' death, there is the agony in the garden, the betrayal and the arrest, and the trial which made a mockery of justice, to face. Yet His sacrifice was a vindication of God's holiness. Flesh was crucified to reveal God's righteousness.

When the Lord was arrested, His Disciples forsook Him and fled. He had sought to warn them of the sufferings, death and resurrection that awaited Him. They appeared to be so preoccupied with the thought of a Kingdom near at hand that they seemed not to hear. That night of tragedy, the Lord was handed from one to another until finally; He was led forth and crucified. He died and He was buried.

GETHSEMANE - JOHN 18:1, 2; MATT. 26:30-34; MARK 14:26-41; LUKE 22:39-46

Before leaving the room, the Lord and the Apostles sang a Psalm. This is the only Biblical reference that we have to Jesus' singing a Psalm or indeed other form of sung 'hymn' to His Father.

Jesus then led the Disciples from the city, instructing them as He went, (Mark 14:26-31; Matthew 26:31-35), over the brook Kidron to a garden called Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives.

John is the only Gospel writer who refers to the name of this brook. The meaning of Kidron is "dark" or "turbid," and it is described as a turbid brook between the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem. This aspect of darkness and cloudiness conveys the thought of sadness or dejection or mourning. Considering what took place in the garden and the sad events that transpired that night, it is fitting that John took care to record the name of the brook over which they passed.

Bible references very quickly provide us with Scriptural echoes relating to two very noteworthy ancestors of Jesus. In both cases the reference to the Kidron is associated with sorrow and mourning.

Shimei, the plotter, was warned by Solomon that if he ever chose to cross the Kidron he would thus signal the mourning of his own death. (1 Kings 2:37)

In 2nd Samuel, we have reference to David leaving Jerusalem by the Kidron at the time of Absalom's rebellion. (2nd Sam. 15:23)

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Having passed over the Kidron while all the country was weeping, David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives:

“...And wept as he went, and his head was covered and he walked barefoot...” 2 Sam. 15:30

In one of His prophecies, Jeremiah refers to the Valley of the Dead Bodies and all the fields as far as the Brook Kidron. (Jeremiah 31:40)

In Gethsemane, we find an echo and a foreshadowing. The struggle for man’s redemption, foretold in a garden (Genesis 3:15), was now to come to its crisis in a garden and to be finally resolved in another garden. (John 19:41)

When Judas left the upper room to plot the trap for Jesus, he doubtless anticipated that Jesus would go to the garden when they had completed the supper. John records that Judas knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His Disciples. (John 18:2)

It is probable that Jesus and the Apostles spent the night there on occasions when they left Jerusalem too late to make the journey back to Bethany where He usually stayed in the home of Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Luke states that they went there that night, “as was His custom.” (Luke 22:39)

As they made their way there on this evening, disillusionment awaited the Disciples. Jesus warned them they would be offended that night, for Zechariah had prophesied that He, their Shepherd, would be smitten and they as sheep would be scattered. (Zech.13:7)

Matthew records the words that Jesus spoke to them as they made their way toward Gethsemane:

“...You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, I will strike down the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.” Matthew 26:31

Led by Peter they were all indignant at the very suggestion that they would ever be disloyal to their Master. (Matt. 26:33-35; Mark 14:29-31) They had yet to learn the lesson that we all have to learn. Flesh of itself cannot overcome trial:

“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and

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as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.” Romans 8:3

In his letter to the Romans, Paul had already stressed to his readers, that the strength of the flesh is greater than the strength of the human will. (Romans 7:18-21)

Sharing this weakness of flesh Himself, Jesus knew full well that prayer for guidance and the protection of God’s overshadowing care, was essential to overcoming temptation. This had been His constant practice, and He had been sustained.

Jesus knew that from now on His Disciples would especially need such Divine strength, and so, as they arrived at the garden, He gave them a final instruction: **“...Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” Luke 22:40**

Within the hour, the Disciples proved that they were much like us, and too often, left God out of account when faced with trial. When Jesus asked them to pray to overcome the trials before them, they went to sleep. (Matt. 26:40, 43, 45)

We can all take warning from this, and should always endeavour to keep before us the advice that Paul later gave to the Colossians:

“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;” Col. 4:2

The words of Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane help us to understand His character even more. He knew of the painful death which lay before Him, and of the terrible ordeal and suffering which would be His. He pleaded with the Father, that if it were possible, He might be delivered quickly from this ordeal. But at the same time, He willingly submitted to anything that the Father would require of Him. (Matt. 26:39, 42)

There was no other way possible. In God’s plan, we see the terrible cost of sin. Man’s salvation would be obtained by the sufferings and death of the sinless Son of God. In this we see the magnificent love of Christ for us. He willingly submitted to His Father’s will that we might have life, in spite of the weakness of our flesh.

Twice in this lonely vigil, Jesus had retraced His steps to where He had left Peter, James and John, a short distance away. He was very distressed and troubled, grieved to the point of death. (Mark 14:33, 34) In essence, He was alone with the conflict

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within Him, agonizing over it until sweat formed on His brow and fell like drops of blood to the ground.

For the third time, He went back to pray and battle with the protesting forces of His will. This time, He found that He was not alone. An Angel of God stood with Him, and strengthened Him. He found new strength in the presence of this Heavenly Messenger, and with His final victory came a peace.

We cannot leave that lonely scene in the garden without giving some reverent thought to the cause of His desolation of Spirit. Fear of death, even the excruciating death that He knew awaited Him, could not have been a prominent factor. The One who touched a leper's scaly flesh, who stood on the bulwarks of the storm tossed boat, who fearlessly faced enemies armed to kill Him, did not fear the wrath of men. There was little that was physical in His cry for release from the cup that was about to be pressed to His lips. It was mental and spiritual.

The Psalms provide continuing insight into the Spirit of Christ, particularly in relationship to the suffering which He was to endure. Whenever we read them, we should be searching for those foreshadowings that point forward to His agony on our behalf. They will help us to remember what He endured for us.

As we read of, and think of, His lonely dejected form in that garden, we do well to read Psalm 69. It abounds with unmistakable references to Christ and His suffering, which find their fulfillment throughout the Gospel record. They are certainly appropriate words to give insight into Jesus' true suffering in the garden. Consider now just three verses as you think of Him, His eyes raised in pleading to His Father:

“Because for Thy sake I have born reproach; dishonor has covered my face. I have become estranged from my brothers, and an alien to my mother's sons. For zeal for Thy house has consumed Me, and the reproaches of those who reproach Thee have fallen on me.” Psalm 69:7-9

Betrayal and Arrest

The conflict was over. Strengthened by His communion with the Father, Jesus came the third time to His sleeping Disciples:

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“...It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man has been betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!” Mark 14:41, 42

The waiting was over. Very soon, Judas would approach to betray Him.

Back at Jerusalem, there would have been scenes of urgent activity. Everything that happened from this point forward, until His crucifixion, is a true echo of the final urgency in the observation of the Passover. One of its aspects was urgency, symbolizing the haste that existed as the nation of Israel prepared for departure from Egypt.

This was required in the observation of the Passover. The meal had to be eaten in “haste.” (Exodus 12:11) Haste was now the key-note of all the Jews’ arrangements. If they were to kill Jesus, as they intended, His betrayal, arrest, trial and crucifixion had to be arranged before sunset on the 14th day of Abib. Everything would have to be hurried through as it was already well into the night, and delay might defeat their purpose by allowing saner, wiser counsels to prevail.

Furthermore, they did not want to stone Him. They wanted Rome to crucify Him and so discredit Him, for then they could claim that He was rightly condemned, being cursed of God. (Deut. 21:23) They would be innocent of any injustice.

The Roman Governor was Pontius Pilate. Obviously urgent representations had been made to him. As was later revealed, the charge against Jesus was sedition. They had obviously been successful in convincing Pilate that a serious plot was involved. Pilate must have been anticipating a major local revolt, for he sent 600 armed soldiers (a cohort) led by a commander, who was an officer over 1,000 soldiers. (John 18:12)

With the officers (i.e. Temple guard) of the Jews, led by Judas, carrying torches and staves and swords, this group of soldiers converged on Gethsemane. Betrayal was consummated with a kiss. (Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53)

Jesus fearlessly admitted His identity, and like the Good Shepherd in His care for His sheep, He pleaded for His Disciples: “...*Let these go their way*” **John 18:8**

In identifying Himself, Jesus said simply, “I am He.” The effect was dramatic. Overawed by His majesty and His purity, they drew back and fell to the ground. Recovering from their initial reaction, the Roman Cohort, the commander and the Temple guard of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him. (John 18:12)

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Peter, alone, offered a defence, once again displaying the impetuous nature that controlled him. Facing hundreds of armed men he attacked with a sword, cutting off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. If Jesus had called for them, there were available 12 legions of Angels to secure their defence – 6,000 Angels for each of them and Himself. (72,000 Angels) Consider the temptation. This was the power that His Father had given Him. Having pleaded with His Father to let this trial pass, He knew that He could call upon such Divine support. If He had done so, He would not have done His Father's will. He would have failed, and mankind would have been condemned to death.

But it was not then a question of who has the most power, that is men or God. The real issue the honour and righteousness of God, His Truth. So Jesus performed His last miracle of healing, and healed the servant's ear. He told Peter to put the sword away, adding that "all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52)

In these simple words Jesus provided a foreshadow of the day when He will return to this earth in judgment. When the sword is removed from the earth, all those who have lived by its principles will likewise be removed. (Isaiah 34:1-3; Micah 4:3, 4)

The Trial

The trial of Jesus was in fact no trial at all. It was judicial murder. There was a pretence of justice, and with difficulties developing and precious time running out, even that was cast aside. The arrest was illegal because only voluntary witnesses were allowed to bring a wrong-doer to the Sanhedrin.

The time of trial was illegal. No capital cases were allowed to be tried after sunset. The cross-questioning and challenge of His judge was illegal. He should have been acquitted immediately. The evidence of the witnesses had failed.

But Jesus was arrested by conspiracy, tried by enemies, testified against by hired witnesses. Time was the great factor, time, and a suitable charge which would allow Pilate to confirm the death sentence. He must be condemned before the multitudes of worshipers realized what had happened. Evil was abroad that night, evil concentrated and unrelieved. This was their hour, and the power of darkness would prevail.

Before Annas - John 18:13-24

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Jesus was led away and was first brought before the unscrupulous Annas, Father-in-law of Caiaphas. Although he was no longer the official High Priest, he kept the title as did five of his sons. He asked Jesus about His Disciples and His doctrine. (John 18:19)

The decision to put Jesus to death had already been made. (Matt. 26:59) The principle that there should be no sentence without a fair hearing, had already been put aside. (Compare John 7:51) While Caiaphas was trying to call the Sanhedrin together, Annas had been appointed to get Jesus to say something that they could use against Him. Jesus was uncooperative, pointing out that anything He had to say in this regard had already been taught openly in the Synagogues and in the Temple. There were no secrets.

The first blow fell on His cheek, the first of many that He would receive that night. (John 18:22) Unsuccessful in his efforts to obtain any incriminating information, Annas sent Jesus, still bound, to Caiaphas.

Before Caiaphas - Matthew 26:57-68

Although it was very late, a call went out to gather the Sanhedrin together. It would not pass sentence of death until dawn broke, (Luke 22:66), but, meanwhile, Jesus was subjected to an illegal trial that went on throughout the night.

Many false witnesses came forward, but their evidence conflicted. When Jesus refused to answer the various charges made against Him, Caiaphas used the one expedient left to him:

“...I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.” Matthew 26:63

Through a misapplication of Leviticus 5:1, regarding testimony, the Jews determined that the High Priest had power to exact an oath from a person. A person could be required to testify, even against himself, on this basis. Silence was considered an admission of guilt.

Caiaphas' intention was obvious. Jews would condemn for blasphemy anyone saying that he was the son of the living God. (John 10:36) Caesar would condemn as treasonable, anyone who said his destiny was to conquer Rome. Jesus responded:

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“...You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Matthew 26:64

A review of the references relating to this quotation will quickly reveal the prophetic echoes that Jesus had incorporated in His response. This reply took in Psalm 110:1, and Daniel 7:13-14, as well as Psalm 2.

Putting these together, Jesus had, in effect, stated to Caiaphas, His position. As Messiah, Israel’s deliverer, David’s Son and Son of God, He would be crucified, but exalted to the right hand of the Ancient of Days, and would receive from Him world-wide dominion.

Caiaphas wasn’t worried about the implications of what Jesus said. He obtained what he was after, evidence of blasphemy. He pressed for and gained the verdict, “guilty of death.” (Matthew 26:65-68)

As soon as it was dawn, a formal assembly of the council would be held to gain a “legal” decision, (Luke 22:66), but meanwhile, Jesus was handed over to the Temple guards to be mocked and spat upon.

Before Pilate - John 18:28-38

Having decided His guilt, the Jews took Jesus before Pontius Pilate. It was their aim above all that Jesus should be crucified. They had charged Jesus with perverting the nation, forbidding payment of tribute and affirming Himself to be King. (Luke 23:2)

Pilate had been prepared for this when they aroused him to send troops with the Temple guard to Gethsemane. He nevertheless determined to conduct his own interview. He considered the charges, but found them to be groundless and said so. (John 18:38)

The Sanhedrin was not to be so easily denied. They began to accuse Jesus of many things:

“...He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee, even as far as this place.” Luke 23:5

Before Herod - Luke 23:7-12

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At the mention of Galilee, Pilate perceived a way out of this dilemma. That was Herod's jurisdiction, and Herod was even then visiting the city. Pilate saw an excellent opportunity to do three things at once. He could relieve the Sanhedrin's pressure. He could escape responsibility for what was done to Jesus. He could also placate Herod, with whom he had been at enmity. (Luke 23:12) He, therefore, sent Jesus to Herod. (Luke 23:7)

Jesus now stood before the Baptist's murderer, who had thought that John had risen from the dead when he heard of Jesus' fame. He was an evil man, who was under the influence of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Herod had illegally married her. (Bible echo - from the time of Elijah). He asked Jesus many questions, but Jesus would not answer. The Chief Priests and Scribes vehemently accused Jesus, and Herod's mood changed from inquiry to mockery. With his soldiers, he "treated Him with contempt," dressing Him in a gorgeous robe.

But it is difficult to deal with someone who will not answer you. He sent Him back to Pilate.

Before Pilate Again - John 18:39, 40; 19:1-15

By this time, the city was astir. Unusual activity always attracts a crowd. Pilate wanted the people there, (Luke 23:13), because he knew that envy was at the base of the charges against Jesus. (Matt. 27:18)

Pilate felt the people had to know what was going on, and quickly the crowd gathered. Pilate's own mind was made up. Neither he nor Herod had found any fault in Jesus. Added to this, his wife had been troubled by a dream, and had warned him against any injustice against Jesus. (Matt. 27:19) He would, therefore, chastise Jesus and free Him. (Luke 23:14-16) Alternatively, as the Passover custom was, they could choose the release of Jesus or Barabbas, a robber, who, in the course of an insurrection or uprising, had committed murder. Swiftly, the Priests incited the people, "not this man, but Barabbas." (John 18:40)

Pilate, apparently to placate the people, scourged Jesus, his soldiers mocking Him, and then, a second time, and a third, protested Jesus' innocence. It was useless:

"But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices began to prevail." Luke 23:23

They Crucified Him - John 19:16-19

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Taken out by Roman soldiers, Jesus was crucified at a place call Calvary, Golgotha, the place of a skull. There, as Isaiah had prophesied, He died the death of a common criminal. (Isaiah 53:12) Mark states:

“And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, and He was numbered with transgressors.” Mark 15:28

The prophecy of Genesis 3:15 had said that the woman’s seed would be “bruised in the heel.” But the serpent was itself to be bruised “in the head.” The nails in Jesus’ feet effectively bruised His heel. His walk was then interrupted while He was in the tomb. But 3 days later, He rose again and walked among His followers.

Men of darkness had combined to extinguish the “Light of the World.” (John 8:12) He “died unto sin once.” (Romans 6:10) Throughout His life, the Lord Jesus repudiated the suggestions for self-indulgence inherent to the flesh. He never sinned. (John 8:46; Col. 1:22) As Peter later wrote, in His sinless life, He fulfilled the Passover requirement:

“But with precious blood, as of a Lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.” 1 Peter 1:19

Jesus always rejected the call of the flesh. When He died sinless, sin had been condemned, not Jesus. (Romans 8:3; compare Hebrews 2:14)

It was Jesus who had been victorious, not sin. The serpent power of sin had been “bruised in the head.” From noon until 3 p.m., when the first of the Law’s Passover Lambs would be slain, (Bible echo - Exodus 12:6), darkness enshrouded the land. (Matthew 27:45)

At that time, having cried out with a loud voice, (Bible echo - Matt. 27:46) Jesus died and the veil of the Temple was rent in two. (Matt. 27:50, 51) The rending of the veil of the Temple indicated that the Mosaic Law was at an end and the death of Jesus marked the fulfillment of all the sacrificial types and shadows of the Law. The way into the most Holy Place was now opened, showing a new and a living way, and all have access to the Father through Jesus Christ, our High Priest.

When Israel sinned in the wilderness, and God sent among them serpents whose bite meant death, Moses was told to place on a pole a serpent of brass. If those who had been bitten beheld it, looked upon it, they would be saved from death. (Numbers 21:7-9) It was not the brass serpent that saved them. What saved them was their faith in

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God, their conviction that to truly honor Him, the flesh must be hanged on a pole. To behold Christ crucified is to behold the fulfillment of the foreshadow in the brass serpent:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.” John 3:14, 15

We must also, as He did, endeavour to refuse to satisfy the impulses inherent to the flesh, even when faced by extreme provocation. Our Saviour did this even when facing the trials inherent to crucifixion. His true Disciples are dedicated to rejecting what is bad, while pursuing what is good. We may not always be successful, but we must realize that we are alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord:

“Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Romans 6:4

Burial - John 19:31-42

To satisfy the Jewish desire to keep the detail of the Law, it was necessary that death should take place and the bodies be removed before sunset. In the case of the thieves crucified with Christ, death was hastened by breaking their legs, but Jesus was already dead. (John 19:31-37)

Not a bone...shall be broken - John 19:36

The Jewish leaders had a problem, actually many problems. The physical manifestations that were occurring as Jesus died would have been extremely disturbing as they added credibility to Jesus' position as the Son of God. The obscuring of the sun causing 3 hours of darkness cast an eerie pall over the whole scene. (Luke 23:44) The sudden tearing of the Temple veil was unexplainable. Not only that, it was torn from the top down, not from the bottom up, as it would have been if men had taken hold of it and torn it. (Luke 23:45; Mark 15:38)

This occurred as Jesus cried out. At the same time the earth trembled convulsively as an earthquake shook the area. (Matt. 27:50,51) Not many months earlier Jesus had cried out with a loud voice and Lazarus came forth from his tomb. (John 11:43)

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This had been devastating enough to the Jewish leaders that it reaffirmed their need to kill Him. But now, in the last moments of His life, as Jesus cried out with a loud voice:

“...The tombs were opened; and many bodies of the Saints who had fallen asleep were raised;” Matt. 27:52

Even the Roman Centurion keeping guard over Jesus, seeing all these things became frightened, and was prompted to declare: *“...Truly this was the Son of God!” Matt. 27:54*

In addition to all of these occurrences, which they might, somehow, have been able to explain away as due to natural causes after Jesus' death, they were faced with the controlling hand of God which could not be shrugged off. Before the very eyes of the people, as Jesus hung on the cross, prophecy was being fulfilled attesting to the fact that He was indeed the Messiah, the Son of God.

His anguished cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?,” (Mark 15:34), immediately called attention to the fulfillment of Psalm 22 regarding the Messiah.

Even the soldiers who had crucified Christ, unwittingly drew attention to Psalm 22. In so doing they provided living proof of the breathtaking detail and accuracy of God's Word. Each of the 4 guards had taken one of His outer garments. Because His tunic was seamless, they decided to cast lots for it rather than tear it and divide it.

How could David, writing hundreds of years before, have possibly anticipated that these 4 soldiers, at the foot of the cross, would cast lots for the clothing of the Messiah? Yet with pin point accuracy, he provides the prophecy given to him by God:

“They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.” Psalm 22:18

The desperate organizers of Jesus' death determined that if they could defeat even one prophecy concerning the Messiah, any claims that He was the Messiah could immediately be branded as false.

An official deputation went to Pilate indicating that the Passover Feast and Sabbath would begin in a matter of hours. According to their religion it was necessary that the corpses of these crucified men be suitably disposed quickly. (Deut. 21:23) They asked him to command that the legs of the three men be broken so as to accelerate

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their deaths. To Pilate, the request seemed harmless enough. What would a Roman ruler know of prophecy concerning a Jewish Messiah?

“He keeps all His bones; not one of them is broken.” Psalm 34:20

The Jews must have been filled with a sense of victory as they relayed the order from Pilate to the Centurion that the legs of the crucified men be broken. We must stand in awe of God’s control as the record tells us that the soldier went first to one thief and then to the other, but last of all to Jesus. Roman discipline would indicate that he was trained to obey every order explicitly. He hesitated and decided that Jesus was already dead. To prove it, instead of breaking His legs, he thrust his javelin into Jesus’ body.

To the dismay of the observing Jews, this soldier not only fulfilled the prophecy regarding the bones, but he provided the means for another Scripture to be fulfilled when Jesus returns as the Lord of Glory:

“...They will look on Me whom they have pierced;...” Zech. 12:10

Blood and Water - John 19:34

John records that when the soldier pierced Jesus’ side, immediately there came out blood and water. He then goes on to proclaim that he himself was witness to this and that in this witness is truth so that his readers might also believe. (John 19:35)

John in all his witnessing, was not totally concerned with simply recording the facts. Of far greater importance in his eyes were the Spiritual truths that such facts proclaim. We might then look for such significance in His witness of the water and the blood. What was their witness?

In relationship to the Messiah the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament, written under the Spirit direction of God, contain many, many references to the significance of blood and water. The New Testament alone abounds with allusions to the importance of water and its symbolic association with salvation. Similarly, the blood of the Lamb is stressed as essential to salvation. References to either one provide continuing echoes from the Old Testament.

As a guide to searching out the significance of such signs intended by John, we now draw attention to only three. The student is urged to look for others as each one

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sheds ever greater light on the importance and understanding of water and blood combining to lead us to salvation.

To begin with these were symbols of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, when the Passover was instituted. Israel had come out of Egypt, their firstborn having been preserved through the blood of the lamb. The nation as a whole was preserved by passing through the waters of the Red Sea.

In His meeting with the woman at the well at Samaria, Jesus stated to her:

"...Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give Him shall never thirst; But the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." John 4:14

This provides us with a direct echo out of the Old Testament which finds eloquent reinforcement and fulfillment in the piercing of the side of Jesus:

"Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink..." Exodus 17:6

The people in the wilderness had been grumbling to Moses that they and their children were dying of thirst. God commanded Moses to strike the rock and out of it came life-giving water. The reference to the rock provides immediate connection to Jesus.

Christ Himself provided an allusion to this incident of the rock in the wilderness. It was on the Feast of Tabernacles, the very day which celebrated the giving of water in the wilderness. Jesus cried out in the Temple:

"...If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture said, from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:37, 38

From the Messiah, typified by the smitten rock, would flow living water.

From Jesus' own mouth came another significant connection between these two symbols combining in salvation:

"...Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." John 3:5

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“...Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” John 6:53, 54

Here is plain anticipation of requirements involving blood and water that Jesus instituted in His ministry.

Baptism, a birth out of spiritual water, is the beginning of a person's life in Christ. By this means we are identified with the One whom we acknowledge as Saviour, Master, Lord.

The bread and wine are the outward tokens of the grace and power by which that new life, begun in baptism, may be maintained and matured.

Baptism by itself will achieve nothing. Its work must be consolidated with the spirit of truth and repentance entering our bodies, nourished by a sharing of the fullness of Christ through the life that He can impart.

John ties all these elements together in beautiful summary in his 1st Epistle:

“This is the One who came by water and by blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, the Water and the Blood; and the three are in agreement.” 1 John 5:6-8

In this we see that the Spirit (in the Gospel), and the Water (of baptism), and the Blood of Christ shed on the cross and symbolized in the wine of the Memorial Supper do agree and combine in the truth of our salvation.

The Tomb - John 19:38-42

When Jesus was taken down from the cross, His body was taken by loving hands and carefully, if hastily, placed in a new tomb. There, for three days, He awaited the resurrection.

The Jews probably wanted the body of Jesus taken down, and flung, as a criminal, into the burning rubbish heaps of Gehennah. Some awareness of this must have prompted the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea to approach Pilate and claim the body of

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Jesus. Along with Nicodemus, he buried the body in his new rock hewn sepulchre. Thus was another prophecy fulfilled. It was written of the Lamb of God:

“His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was a rich man in His death...” Isaiah 53:9

LESSON FOR US

The sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ represented the extreme agony that a man could be called upon to endure. Although provoked to sin by every means by which sin might be aroused in a man, He maintained throughout His trust in God, and did not sin. He was convinced of the rightness of God's Ways, and in His determination to uphold these ways, even to the death of the cross, He was sustained by God. Consider such passages as Galatians 3:13 and Romans 3:23-26.

Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians sums it up for us:

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:21

Do we fully appreciate what has been done for us? To what extent has it affected our lives and our actions? Do we really understand that Christ's example is one of putting God first, upholding God's supremacy and His righteousness?

Those who do will be prepared to follow Christ's example, whatever the difficulties and the sacrifices. Before us there is the prospect of association with Jesus when He returns in triumph as Lord and Christ in His Father's Kingdom.

“Then the King will say...Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Matthew 25:34

Test Yourself

4. Briefly discuss the trial and condemnation of Jesus.
5. Describe two prophecies that were fulfilled when Jesus was crucified.
6. Briefly discuss what the bread and wine represent.