

Gospel of Matthew Chapter 26 -- John Karmelich

1. Chapter 26 through the end of Matthew (Chapter 28) is the actual story of the death and resurrection of Christ.
 - a) It is the essential message of the Gospel story and of Christianity.
 - b) Back when I gave my introduction to Matthew, I stated it was important as Christians, every now and then to go over the fundamentals.
 - i) Much in the same way a trained athlete always practices the fundamentals, it is important for us as Christians to keep our eyes, ears and minds focused on the fundamental message of the cross.
 - c) Chapter 26 focuses on the events leading up to the cross.
 - d) Chapter 27 focuses on the Roman trials and crucifixion.
 - e) Chapter 28 focuses on the events of the resurrection and thereafter.
 - i) Remember Matthew didn't put in the chapter breaks, they are added much later.
 - ii) This is just "our" way of dividing up the chapters.
2. I like to call Chapter 26, "reality check".
 - a) Jesus just spent the last two chapters focusing on the events of His second coming.
 - i) Those previous chapters were all future-focused.
 - ii) A few of those predictions are already, literally fulfilled, but most of them are some future date to us as well as the original disciples.
 - b) Chapter 26 gets back to the reality of the present moment.
 - c) It was important that Jesus gave that two-chapter speech to give the disciples some hope given the horrors they are about to face.
 - d) Chapter 26 reminds us that there are times in our life when the "world is falling apart" and there does not seem to be any hope of the disaster-of-the-moment.
 - i) Despite Jesus' assurance to the disciples that all will be better day, they still run in fear for their lives and see all that they have hoped for shattered.
 - ii) One of the reasons we read all through the bible is so our lives are not "stuck on Chapters 26 and 27" but we see the "happy ending of Chapter 28". ☺
 - a) We get to share in that glorious resurrection. That needs to be kept in focus as we read through the difficult passages of these two chapters.
3. Another thing to notice in this chapter is that Jesus is always in charge.
 - a) As one studies the details of these events, notice Jesus is always in control of the situation.
 - b) Others are putting Jesus on trial, but it is really those others who are being judged.
 - c) We will read of Judas betrayal, but also be aware that Jesus knew in advance of his plans.
 - d) The religious Jewish leaders did not want Jesus killed at the time of the Passover (Verse 5), yet Jesus himself controls when the events are going to occur.
 - e) Painful events are always more bearable if you know there is an end.
 - i) I am convinced the most painful part for Jesus was not the crucifixion, but the fact he had to be separated from God the Father for the payment of sin.
 - ii) In this chapter, Jesus prays three times that "if there is any other way, let it be done". Notice that Jesus accepts the Father's will, as there is no other way.
 - f) Well, I have 75 verses to cover in 12 pages. Let's start running! ☺
4. Verse 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."
 - a) "Finished saying all of these things" refers to the two-chapter speech about the second coming of Jesus in Chapters 24 and 25.
 - b) The disciples at this point may have been thinking about their eternal rewards and how glorious that event will be. Jesus now gets them back to the reality of the cross.

- c) Notice Jesus says, “(He) will be (future) handed over to be crucified” in Verse 2.
 - i) Jesus was well aware of the timing of all the events in advance.
 - d) The “Passover” holiday is discussed a number of times in the bible as a requirement for all Jews to celebrate. The methodology is discussed in Exodus Chapter 12.
 - i) Through the centuries, various traditions were added to this holiday.
 - ii) If you read Exodus 12, it never says “and this holiday is symbolic of how the Messiah will be crucified”.
 - iii) The Bible often reads in word-pictures. For example, if you read the Passover section in Exodus 12, you can see how every verse is symbolic of Jesus death as payment for our sins.
 - a) For example, the whole lamb must be consumed (See Verse 3-4)
 - (1) This means you must accept Jesus as full payment for sin.
 - b) The lamb must be a “year old (i.e., in the prime of its life) without blemish (which refers to defects). Jesus had no sin (See 1st Corinthians 5:21).
 - c) The lamb must be slaughtered.
 - d) None of the bones may be broken. We will read in Chapter 27 that a Roman soldier disobeyed the order to break Jesus’ legs to hasten death. In a strange way, this satisfies this prophecy of “no broken bones”.
 - iv) In the Passover, the blood on the door spared the life of those in the house, who trusted in that blood saving their life. Just as we trust that the shed blood spares for eternity our life.
 - v) One realizes why Jesus “insisted” upon the crucifixion happening on Passover.
5. Verse 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 plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. ⁵ “But not during the Feast,” they said, “or there may be a riot among the people.”
- a) Why would the “chief priests and the elders” want to kill Jesus?
 - i) In John’s Gospel, we learn “Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people.” (John 18:14, NIV)
 - ii) My free-translation: “The religious Jews feared losing the status quo”.
 - b) The Romans conquered Israel, but let the Jews practice their religion.
 - i) History records that Caiaphas was a corrupt high priest appointed by the Romans. His father in law Annas was the “power behind the throne”.
 - ii) John’s Gospel records that Jesus first trial was before Annas, and then Jesus was brought to the home of Caiaphas.
 - iii) History further records that both Annas and Caiaphas were corrupt and financially profited off of the animal sacrifices in the Temple.
 - a) We get clues of this by the two times that Jesus “overturned the tables” (See John 2:15 for #1; Matthew 21:12 or Mark 11:15 for #2).
 - iv) Therefore, Jesus posed a threat to their status quo with his growing popularity.
 - v) The High Priest feared losing his job, his livelihood, his power, etc. if Jesus was allowed to continue. Therefore, he recommended the death of Jesus.
 - c) The last thing to notice is that they didn’t want Jesus arrested during the (Passover) Feast, as they didn’t want a riot.
 - i) The Passover is part of an 8-day long feast called the “Feast of Unleavened Bread”.
 - a) The population of Jerusalem swelled from a small city into hundreds of thousands or a million-plus during this feast at this time.
 - b) The historian Josephus records that 250,000 lambs were killed for this feast. If you figure say 1 lamb for 4-5 people, you get an idea of population.
 - ii) Getting back to the Romans, the Roman’s primary rule was “no riots”. They allowed limited freedom, but people would be killed if you rioted against Rome. This was the fear of the Jewish leadership by killing Jesus during this time period.

6. Verse 6: While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as 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.
- a) Bethany was a “suburb” of Jerusalem, a short walking distance away.
 - b) We don’t know much, if anything about “Simon the Leper”. I personally suspect it was just someone Jesus had cured sometime during his ministry.
 - c) From Verse 7-14 we have this story of the woman pouring perfume on Jesus’ head.
 - i) In John’s account we learn this was Mary of “Mary and Martha and Lazarus” fame. We also learn that she wiped it on Jesus head with her hair. (See John 11:2).
 - a) I may be getting a little weird here, but I think it is “arousing” for a woman to be wiping my head with perfume. I have heard a sermon or two on this topic. It has to do with wanting to please our Lord and Master.
 - ii) I see this as a beautiful visual picture of “adoration” of our Lord.
 - a) Not that God wants us to perfume our hair and go to church. ☺
 - b) It is about giving our all for Jesus’ sake.
 - d) One has to remember that there were no “savings accounts” in those days.
 - i) If people wanted saved money, they had to keep it in their house.
 - ii) They often looked for small expensive items to trade for, such as this perfume.
 - e) I suspect that Mary just “didn’t happen to have” this in the corner of her house.
 - i) I suspect she bartered and traded up for it, as she understood the purpose.
7. Verse 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, 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 I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."
- a) When you read this whole story, you get the impression that Mary was the only person in the room who “got it” about Jesus death and resurrection.
 - i) The other disciples somehow understood that Jesus was “going away”. If they did not, they would not have asked Jesus about the events of his return.
 - ii) I don’t think anyone but Mary understood at this point Jesus crucifixion & death.
 - iii) In Verse 12, Jesus says she did this “for my burial”.
 - b) Getting back to Verse 8, I believe the point is nothing is ever wasted spent on Jesus.
 - i) This does not mean we to “bathe” Jesus with all that we own.
 - ii) Following Jesus does mean that all we have now belongs to Him. He may choose to take it all away, but in most cases, he turns and takes what resources you do have and wants you to use them for his Glory. That still means planning, saving for you family, etc. It is very much an individual calling what God wants us to do with the resources he has given to us.
 - iii) In the cases like this, where someone gives all they have to Jesus, I do believe Jesus rewards this person greatly.
 - a) Although I can’t prove it from the text, I don’t believe Mary starved to death because she gave all she had to put this perfume on Jesus’ head. When you fully put your trust in Jesus, He turns around and takes care of you and provides for all of your needs. (Reference: Jer. 5:7, Phil. 4:19).
 - c) Let’s look at Verse 11: “The poor you will always have with you”
 - i) Jesus is making a prediction that there will always be poor around.
 - ii) It does mean to ignore the poor, just to keep this in perspective.
 - iii) Remember that Jesus healed many of the poor, so he does care for them.

- d) Jesus then says in Verse 11: “but you will not always have me”.
 - i) Jesus was referring to himself in the flesh.
 - ii) Spiritually speaking, Jesus is with us always.
 - iii) The last verse of Matthew’s Gospel says, “I am with you always” (28:20, NIV).
 - e) Verse 13 says, “What she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”
 - i) Reading through Matthew, you get the impression the disciples were obsessed with their own rewards and stature for eternity.
 - a) John and James asked Jesus to sit at his right hand (Matthew 20:21).
 - b) I believe a big part of the reason the disciples asked about Jesus Second Coming is they wanted to be part of the power of millennial kingdom.
 - ii) Here was this same group criticizing Mary for “wasting” the perfume on Jesus.
 - iii) The lesson for you and I is nothing is ever wasted for Jesus sake.
 - a) Jesus said “And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.” (Matthew 10:42 NIV)
 - b) All we do for Jesus is remembered for eternity.
 - c) This woman (Mary) took a very expensive item and used it for Jesus.
 - d) For 2,000 years and counting, Mary has been remembered through history for this event. Remember that the Gospels were not written for about 20-30 years (John’s Gospel is a little older) after this event.
8. Verse 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 hand him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. ¹⁶ From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.
- a) One of the great questions of history is why did Judas do this?
 - i) The “most logical” explanation is that he saw Jesus’ miracles and thought, “I want to be part of this. Jesus is the Messiah, he is going to overthrow Rome, and set up a new government. I want in on some of that action.”
 - a) When Judas figured out that Jesus’ kingdom was spiritual and not one of immediate power and glory, he looked for an opportunity to betray him.
 - ii) Notice Judas was “religious”. He believed in the Messiah, but was not saved.
 - iii) In the end, Judas was more interested in “saving his skin” than following Jesus.
 - iv) It goes back when Jesus said, “and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” (Matthew 10:38, NIV)
 - v) If you are not willing to follow Jesus all the way to the cross, you are not a Christian and you are not a disciple of Jesus.
 - a) Most of us are not asked to die a martyr’s death. In a sense, we have a tougher assignment in that we have to live for Jesus!
 - vi) Judas was never “saved” in the first place.
 - a) It was Judas’ failure to fully trust Jesus that made him do what he did.
 - b) In Chapter 27, we will read how Judas’ betrayal for 30 pieces of silver was predicted centuries earlier. We’ll discuss that further in the next lesson.
9. Verse 17: On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"
- a) Remember the Passover holiday coincided with the 8-day Feast of Unleavened Bread.
 - b) Notice Jesus the disciples did not forget the Jewish laws. Jesus didn’t say, “These customs don’t matter any more, because I’m starting a new religion.”
 - c) I personally take the view that Jewish-Christians are still to honor the Jewish holidays in remembrance of God’s relationship with the Nation of Israel.
 - i) These holidays are for Israel to remember God’s promises to them as well as prophetic about Jesus. Many good scholars disagree with this view, but so be it. ☺
 - ii) Gentile believers are not required to keep these holidays (See Acts Chapter 15).

10. Verse 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.
 - a) Mark and Luke's Gospel give more details. They both mention that they will recognize this man because he is carrying a jug of water. In that time era, carrying a jug of water was "woman's work" and therefore they would recognize him in a crowd.
 - b) It is interesting to think that Jesus had "contacts" outside of the disciples.
 - i) Maybe Jesus somehow knew this guy directly or maybe an angel told this guy to carry the jug and watch out for Jesus' disciples. We don't know the answer.
 - c) Give the disciples credit for following Jesus orders. Remember that their own lives were at risk. Remember, "Where God leads, God provides".
11. Verse 20: When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹ And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." ²² They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?"
 - a) This part had to be hard for the disciples to accept.
 - b) They all spent three years of their lives, giving up all they had to follow Jesus.
 - c) It was a shock to them that anyone in their group would betray Jesus.
 - d) It is hard for me to understand why anyone would turn away from following Jesus.
 - i) Once you comprehend the eternal joy of salvation, one you have that peace in your heart that all of your sins are forgiven, it is difficult to comprehend why anyone would want to turn from that?
 - ii) Yes, I understand the role of Judas in history and this person was "never saved in the first place". But these verses remind us that not everyone sitting in the church pews around us are willing to pay that price.
 - iii) Many give Jesus "lip service" or they come to church because their spouse makes them come, or they want to be good examples for their children, or a thousand other excuses. Going to church does not make you a Christian just as going in the garage does not make you an automobile! ☺
 - e) Notice that every disciple stopped and asked "is it I?"
 - i) Jesus does that to us. Even though we are not guilty in the eternal-sense of turning our back on God, the fact that we are not perfect makes us examine our lives and see if somehow, we are doing things that are not pleasing to God.
12. Verse 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 not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you."
 - a) Judas, knowing he was guilty repeated the same line as everyone else so that he wouldn't be suspected as the guilt party.
 - b) Notice how you "can't pull the wool over Jesus' eyes". Jesus is well aware of who betrayed him. Notice Jesus is in control of the events.
 - c) Notice that the other disciples said, "Surely not I, Lord" in Verse 22.
 - i) Judas says "Surely not I, Rabbi (teacher)" in Verse 25.
 - ii) One gets in trouble when Jesus "just" becomes your teacher and not your Lord!
 - d) What you have to understand is that the Jewish leaders didn't want Jesus betrayed during the Passover season when all of the big crowds were around.
 - i) By Jesus telling Judas "I know what you are doing", Judas then has to betray him quickly before the other disciples kill him.
 - ii) We read in John's account that Judas left the room right after this (John 13:30).

- e) Jesus says in Verse 24 of Judas, "It is better for him if he had not been born."
 - i) God is perfect. A perfect God knows all things and knows them in advance.
 - ii) Before the world was created God the Father knew of Judas betrayal.
 - iii) Yet, somehow, we have the free-will to decide to follow Jesus or not.
 - iv) At the same time, God the Father knows in advance the decisions we will make.
 - v) My point is Judas cannot stand on judgment day & say, "It wasn't my fault, and I was pre-destined to fulfill this role in history. I played my part, so I'm not guilty".
 - a) God holds us accountable for actions even though he knows the results ahead of time. We may not be able to fully reconcile that fact, but it's true.
 - f) Jesus answer is Verse 25 of "Yes, it is you" is a paraphrase.
 - i) The literal translation is more like "You have said it". The idea is the same and even though it is a paraphrase, it gets the right idea across.
13. Verse 26: While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." ²⁷ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered 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 of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."
- a) This set of scriptures, and a handful of others is the basis of Christian "communion".
 - b) Notice that Jesus commands us to "eat his body and drink his blood".
 - c) It is a classical debate in Christianity over how literal to take these verses.
 - i) The Roman Catholics believe that when you take communion, it literally (miraculously) becomes the body and blood of Christ. This is called "transubstantiation". Their argument is Jesus said, "This is my body/blood".
 - ii) Even Martin Luther, when he started the Protestant Reformation, believed this.
 - iii) Evangelical Christians take this verse spiritually and not literally.
 - a) Their argument is, "Jesus was holding up bread when he said this, not grabbing the skin off his forearm." Further Jesus also said, "I am the door" (John 10:7, 10:9) or "I am the true vine" (John 15:1). Jesus is not a door, nor a plant vine. Some things Jesus say are meant to be taken symbolically.
 - b) My rule is, "If the plain text makes perfect sense seek no other sense"
 - c) Further, "If the plain text makes does not perfect sense seek some other sense", which means look for some other explanation.
 - d) What is we know most about the ritual of communion comes from Paul.
 - i) Paul says we are to do this regularly to remember Jesus' death. (1 Cor. 11:26).
 - ii) We are not to do this in "an unworthy manor" (1 Cor. 11:26-28), which means we take it seriously and examine ourselves of sins to be confessed prior to the action.
 - e) In Verse 28, Jesus calls the Passover wine, "my blood of the covenant".
 - i) The word covenant means contract. To paraphrase, God is making a contract with believers saying "If you believe Jesus blood was "spilled" for your sins and live your life by that fact, all of your sins, past, present and future are forgiven and you get to spend eternity in heaven.
 - ii) This is a "new covenant" in that the way to forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament was through animal sacrifices. Those sacrifices are prophetic word-pictures of what Jesus did on the cross.
 - f) In Verse 29, Jesus says he won't drink of this again until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom"
 - i) The word "until" is a powerful word in the bible.
 - ii) Notice Jesus does not drink wine again until he drinks it with the disciples.
 - a) This must refer to some future event in heaven.
 - iii) In the classic debate of whether Jesus drank grape juice or actual wine, remember this is springtime and grapes are not in season. I am convinced this was wine.

- iv) In heaven, there will be a “wedding banquet” between Jesus and Christians:
 - a) Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.” (Revelation 19:9, NIV)
 - b) Personally, I think this is what Jesus is predicting in Verse 29.
 - c) I’ve always wondered how millions or billions of people can “fit” in one big wedding hall. My view is that we will exist in more than three dimensions in heaven, and somehow that won’t be a problem.
- 14. Verse 30: When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.
 - a) Part of the Jewish ritual of Passover is to sing hymns. They were probably Psalms.
 - b) Commentators have speculated for centuries about which Psalm(s) was being sung.
 - i) Personally, I believe the bible is silent on that issue on purpose.
 - ii) If the Gospel writers revealed that particular hymn, we as Christians would think that Psalm is “more special than the others”.
 - iii) To be fair to all Psalms I believe the issue was purposely kept silent.
- 15. Verse 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."
 - a) Jesus quotes Zechariah 13:7 and says it is about this point in history.
 - i) If you read that verse in Zechariah in context, you would be very difficult to see that Jesus is speaking about this event right here.
 - b) Notice Jesus is trying to reassure the disciples that despite the fact they will run away, Jesus then says in effect, “everything will be fine after I have risen”.
 - i) Jesus was trying to get them to comprehend the resurrection.
 - ii) The disciples didn’t get it, because they were too busy focusing on the fact that they would actually run away from Jesus and not defend him.
 - a) Remember that these guys gave up everything to follow Jesus.
 - b) They have watched Jesus raise people from the dead and perform all sorts of unexplainable miracles. It is inconceivable to them that they would abandon Jesus at this point.
- 16. Verse 33: Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."
 - a) Notice that Jesus just said in Verse 31 “that all (the disciples) will fall away”.
 - b) Peter is basically telling Jesus here, “No Lord, you are wrong!”
 - i) Imagine telling God that he is wrong about something! ☺
 - ii) That is the danger of pride. Pride is doing your will and not God’s will at any one moment of your life. Even if your will “sounds logical” or your will “sounds like something I would do”, it causes you to falter if it is not God’s will.
- 17. Verse 34: "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."
 - a) Jesus specifically gives a sign for Peter to recognize when this is going to happen.
 - b) Despite Peter’s failure coming up, Peter is saved for eternity.
 - c) Once you are “one of Jesus’ followers”, I don’t believe you can lose that salvation as long as you continue to believe in Jesus as God. Peter never did that despite his sins coming up and that is the great lesson from those sins.
- 18. Verse 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.
 - a) When you read through the gospels, you get the impression that Peter is the spokesman of the group. Often, Peter speaks what is the sentiment of the other disciples.
 - b) Notice that all of the other disciples gave the same thought.
 - c) Again, they were all “disobeying” or disbelieving what Jesus just told them.

19. Verse 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."
- a) One of the main agricultural products of that area is olive oil.
 - i) Oil is symbolic of the presence of the Holy Spirit as discussed in previous lessons.
 - ii) Olive oil has to be crushed in order to make that oil.
 - iii) The word "Gethsemane" literally means "oil-press", the place where it is crushed.
 - iv) There is a "pun" here in that the place where Jesus was "betrayed to be crushed" is the place where olives are picked to be crushed.
 - b) Among the 12 disciples, there is sometimes "the inner group of three".
 - i) Peter, James and John got a few more privileges than the other disciples.
 - ii) I believe Peter was picked as he is the "spokesman" of the 12 and the boldest.
 - iii) I believe John was picked as he wrote more than any of the 12 disciples.
 - a) He wrote John's Gospel, 1st, 2nd and 3rd John, and Revelation.
 - iv) I believe James was picked as he was the first church martyr. (See Acts 12:2)
 - c) Notice Jesus calls the disciples to "sit with him while he prays".
 - i) He did not call for these 3 to pray themselves, just to be with Jesus as he prayed.
 - ii) We will get to the "why" in few verses.
20. Verse 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."
- a) Jesus is essentially saying here, "Father, if there is any other way for people to get into heaven other than me go to the cross, let it be so."
 - i) Notice Jesus prays a prayer that God the Father says, "No".
 - ii) That is done for our benefit as well as for Jesus. It is so we understand there is no other way to heaven.
 - iii) If there were another way, Jesus would not have to go to the cross.
 - b) Notice Jesus ends this prayer, with "Yet not as I will, but as you will". That is another item for us to model. The idea of accepting God's will even if we don't like it.
 - i) Let me give you a practical example: "Lord, I don't understand why I am going through all of this suffering right now. If it is your will to go through it, help me to accept it, and to learn the lessons you want me to learn from this situation".
 - ii) I have often found that God doesn't fully change a situation unless we are fully and willfully ready to accept the situation "as is". It is at that point of complete surrender that we can have peace with God.
21. Verse 40: Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not 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 body is weak."
- a) We all know that Peter denied Jesus three times. Did you ever notice that Peter "fell asleep" three times in this section? I believe those two facts are meant to be connected.
 - b) This may sound strange, but I believe there are times when Satan uses "sleep" as a force to combat us praying, studying God's word etc.
 - i) Ever notice that somehow, you are "more tired" when praying or reading the bible than you are if you are doing some other "lighter" activity? Ever wonder why?
 - ii) Satan does not want you praying, and will use any means necessary to stop you.
 - iii) Further, ever notice that when you have prayed a little, or done some service for God, that you feel "refreshed" even when you are dead tired?
 - iv) I'm not arguing against a good night's sleep, I am simply saying to be aware of "spiritual forces" using sleep as a tactic against our relationship with God through prayer, study and service.

22. Verse 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." 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.
- a) Notice that Jesus prayer of Verse 42 is identical to that of Verse 39. This is teaching that repetitive prayer is acceptable. Also notice the prayer is short and to the point.
 - b) Notice that after three times, Jesus stopped this prayer and accepted God's will.
 - c) I don't believe this means to pray exactly three times for something, no more no less.
 - i) It simply means a repeated prayer is acceptable, and we eventually want to get to a point where if God is saying "no" to our prayers, that we accept it.
23. Verse 45: Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"
- a) Jesus found the three disciples asleep after each of the prayers. That failure to pray prevented the spiritual strength to be with Jesus during the next series of events.
 - b) Notice that none of this is a shock to Jesus. He is well aware of Judas arrival at this time.
 - c) When Jesus says, "Rise, let us go!", Jesus does not mean to run away from Judas.
 - i) I believe Jesus was looking out for his disciples. It was not God's will for them to be arrested and crucified at this point.
24. Verse 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.
- a) It is comical to think that an army with swords and clubs is more powerful than Jesus.
 - i) Some of these same "policemen" have seen Jesus perform miracles, so they don't know the extent of his power. They were expecting some sort of resistance.
 - b) Judas' signal to the arresting officers was for him to kiss Jesus. This way, the others would know which one was Jesus among the disciples.
 - i) This leads to the idea that physically, "Jesus was nothing special". If Jesus were much taller, or much better looking than the others, the kiss-part would not be necessary. Judas could have said, "See the guy who is a foot taller than the others, arrest him". My point is Jesus' looks were nothing special compared to others.
 - c) Ever stop to think why God used "Judas" to betray Jesus?
 - i) Let's face it, some of the Pharisees could recognize Jesus by now.
 - ii) I suspect one of the reasons is to support the story that Jesus is God.
 - a) If you and I were to make-up a story about Jesus, we would have "a villain", say a Pharisee betray Jesus, not one of the disciples.
 - iii) The fact that this story is so improbable supports the evidence of accuracy.
25. Verse 50: Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.
- a) Notice Jesus didn't raise a fuss. In John's Gospel, Jesus said that he is the one they are looking for. (That was done just to show the soldiers that Judas picked the right guy).
26. Verse 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.
- a) In John 18:10, we learn that it was Peter who drew the sword.
 - b) It is comical for Peter to think, "Come on Jesus, we can lick these guys, let's fight". ☺
 - c) In Luke 22:51, we learn that Jesus healed the ear of this soldier.
 - i) The last recorded miracle in the bible, chronologically (other than the resurrection) is Jesus "undoing" the damage caused by one of his disciples.
 - ii) That is a lesson for us, as God has to step in and undo the damage we do when we "think" we are being a good witness for Jesus.

27. Verse 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?"
- a) Let's talk about "all who draw the sword will die by the sword."
 - i) Jesus is not calling for pacifism in all situations in life.
 - b) One has to read this verse in context of Verse 53. Jesus is saying in effect, "Peter, if I wanted to fight with swords, I could call down thousands of angels and wipe these guys out. This is about accepting God's will of my arrest at this point in time."
 - c) Jesus reminds his disciples that He is in control of the situation.
 - i) He reminds them that if Jesus wanted to, he could call for 12 "legions" of angels.
 - ii) One night, a single angel killed 185,000 Syrian troops (2nd Kings 19:35).
 - a) The moral of that story: Don't mess with angels. ☺
 - d) Jesus mentions "the scriptures being fulfilled".
 - i) Despite the horror of the events, Jesus is reminding them and us, "Hey folks, this is all going according to plan". As we are going through our rough times, we forget that God is often saying, "Hang in there, you don't realize it, but things are going according to my plans for your life right now." (See Romans 8:28 on this).
28. Verse 55: At that time 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.
- a) Despite the arrest, Jesus is teaching the crowd that He is the Messiah.
 - i) Jesus is saying in effect, "You (arresting officers) look ridiculous here trying to arrest me. I was teaching every day and never hurt anyone. Do you think I'm going to raise a fuss now that you're here to arrest me?"
 - b) The soldiers and chief priests thought they were arresting Jesus to put him on trial.
 - i) Jesus is in control of the situation and is putting them on trial with their actions.
 - c) The last part of Verse 56 says, "Then all the disciples deserted him and fled."
 - i) Despite their denial that they would desert Jesus, the prediction came true.
 - ii) It is a natural human instinct to try to preserve your life, and they fled.
 - iii) I am sure this event stuck in the disciples' minds for years.
 - a) When you study the early chapters of Acts, you get the impression all of the disciples stayed in Jerusalem in the early years of the church despite the persecution. It is almost as if they were thinking, "I fled from Jesus once, I never want to do that again".
29. Verse 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.
- a) It is amazing to think about all the teaching the disciples about the resurrection. None of it "sunk in". Here was Peter, standing outside the trial thinking, "Well, I've hung around Jesus for three years, I might as well watch the end."
 - b) Peter's mistake here was "following Jesus at a distance".
 - i) Getting allegorical here for a moment, we commit our greatest sins when we too "follow Jesus at a distance" as opposed to being close to Him.
30. Verse 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.'"
- a) You have to remember these guys wanted Jesus to be put to death.

- b) Roman law forbade the Jews from killing anyone for a crime.
 - i) Therefore, they needed evidence they could take to the Roman court system.
 - ii) The Romans, like the Jews, needed two witnesses in agreement.
 - iii) A bunch of false witnesses came forward, but none could agree.
 - iv) The Jewish leaders needed “two in agreement” to go to Pontius Pilate.
 - c) There is the possibility that the vote was not 100%. We do read of someone on the council named Joseph of Arimathea who was a voting member and a “secret” disciple of Jesus (Mark 15:43 and John 19:38).
 - d) Verse 61 says that two agreed that Jesus said he would destroy the Temple.
 - i) While their words were correct, that was not Jesus intent. They mislead the group with their false accusation.
 - a) Jesus meant “his body” and not the destruction of the Temple (John 2:21).
 - b) One of the 10 commandments is to “not bear false witness” (Exodus 20:16). The idea behind this command means to not say anything misleading where someone can interpret your words as a false accusation.
31. Verse 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.
- a) Notice Jesus did not speak up and correct the two false witnesses.
 - i) Everything about this trial was illegal and Jesus was not about to condone it by defending himself. Some bible commentators do a detailed study how every aspect of these trials violated either Jewish laws or customs.
 - ii) In life, sometimes there are accusations that are so bad, you don't want to make the accusations “respectable” by responding to them.
32. Verse 63 (cont.): The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."
- a) Jesus kept quiet during this whole proceeding.
 - b) The high priest then, (I'm guessing) out of frustration, asked Jesus, “under oath” to say whether or not he was the Messiah.
 - i) Jewish law required Jesus to respond under this oath. (See Leviticus 5:1).
 - c) Today, Orthodox Jews reject the claim that Jesus is the Messiah because they believe the Messiah will be a man and not “God”. Yet, they accused Jesus of “blasphemy”
 - i) Yet in that day, they understood the Messiah to be the Son of God.
33. Verse 64: "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."
- a) This is one of the few times I can recall where Jesus bluntly stated he was the Messiah.
 - i) Usually Jesus gives some indirect answer as he desires that we come to that conclusion on our own as opposed to Jesus stating it.
 - b) Here is the interesting part, Jesus was telling this crowd, who did not believe in him, that they would see the Son of Man sitting at God the Father's right and hand and his coming.
 - i) Does that mean these guys get resurrected when Jesus comes back for the church?
 - a) I don't think so, as that didn't match up with all the bible verses about the resurrections “before and after” the thousand year period.
 - ii) Personally, I believe when the “Great White Throne Judgment” occurs (after the 1,000 years) is when these condemned people are going to see Jesus coming.
34. Verse 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.
- a) I can't help thinking of the old joke of, “You will be given a fair trial, and then shot”.
 - i) They couldn't get the witnesses to agree, so they “assumed” he was committing blasphemy by claiming to be God.”
 - ii) Of course, Jesus would be innocent of this charge if it were true! ☺

35. Verse 67: Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him ⁶⁸ and said, "Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit you?"
- a) Visualize being hit in the face while blindfolded. You can sense the hatred they had of Jesus at this point. In the next lesson, we'll get more in to the "why" of why Jesus had to suffer prior to the death and resurrection.
36. Verse 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 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, for your accent gives you away." ⁷⁴ Then he began to call down curses on himself 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.
- a) I wanted to take all of this as one paragraph so you can see it in context.
- b) This is the famous story of Peter's three denials of Jesus.
- c) Notice the progression of what happened:
- i) The first time, Peter lied and said he didn't know Jesus. (Verse 70).
- ii) The second time, Peter took an oath saying it wasn't true. (Verse 72).
- iii) The third time, Peter cursed, and swore yelled he didn't know Jesus (Verse 74).
- d) Remember that this is "shoot-first-ask-questions later" Peter!
- i) Peter was known for his boldness.
- a) Peter was the guy who swung the sword in the Garden a few hours back.
- b) Yet he was too scared to tell the truth to a little girl.
- ii) The lesson to learn is that we as Christians often fail in our "strong suit" as opposed to our "weak suit".
- a) It is easy to say to God, "You know God, I need help in this and that area of my life, but I'm pretty good over here, so I'll take care of that myself".
- b) Peter failed in his "strong suit" of being bold.
- c) We need to be grateful and dependent upon God for all areas of our life.
- e) By the way, notice this is not an unforgivable sin.
- i) Despite the fact that Peter lied, swore falsely, etc., Peter is in heaven.
- ii) The only unforgivable sin is the continual, lifetime denial of Jesus as God.
- iii) Peter had a bad day. ☺ He had to suffer for his consequences, but it never cost Peter his eternal salvation.
- f) Isn't it interesting to notice that after Peter's denial is when he remembered Jesus' words about the cock crowing?
- i) We do the same thing. It is usually when we are knee-deep in sin that the words of the bible ring true and realize, "oh oh, I'm going down the wrong path".
- g) Personally, I think Peter was forgiven the moment he went into tears.
- i) This is because Peter did not walk away from Jesus forever, but realized Jesus is Lord and Peter disobeyed Jesus requested to pray with him the night before. That lack of prayer gave Peter the lack-of-strength to be a witness for Jesus.
37. OK, 75 verses in 12 pages. Time for us to get some oxygen and catch our breath. ☺
38. Heavenly Father, We like Peter and the disciples, are guilty at times of turning away from you. We are guilty of not following too closely, and end up with a "pile of sin" in our lives. At those moments, help us to remember what life is all about, and how we are to live for you. Also, keep us close to you and may your will be done through us. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen