

Lesson 10 – 2 January 2011.

The King Prepares for the Cross.

Lesson Scope: [Matthew 26:1-46](#).

Lesson Focus

With the Passover just two days away Israel was again preparing to again preparing commemorate their deliverance from Egypt and the sacrifice required for the firstborn to be spared. Thousands of pilgrims were traveling to Jerusalem to observe this occasion. At this same time, the forces of evil were secretly at work, solidifying a plan to destroy Jesus. More significantly, all this activity was fitting into the timeline of the all-wise God, who planned from eternity past that in the fullness of time He would send forth His Son to redeem mankind. Jesus' cross experience stands as the pivotal point in the entire scope of human history. Jesus, knowing that the hour was at hand and that His disciples were finding it hard to comprehend what was about to take place, again told His disciples, "The son of man is betrayed to be crucified" (Matthew 26:2).

With full awareness of what lay ahead, Jesus faced the crisis in Gethsemane and moved toward the climax at the cross. He deliberately surrendered to the Father's will so that He might accomplish the great work of redeeming the world.

One can hardly fathom the intense feelings surrounding the events of this lesson. The disciples had become very attached to Jesus. He was their leader, and they were depending on His continued presence among them. Peter and the other disciples were sincere in their expression of loyalty to Christ even if it meant death to them. Jesus recognized their willing spirit, but He also understood the weakness of their flesh.

May this lesson point out the truth to us that, the more intense the conflict, the more we need to fall on our knees before God's throne. Do we know what it is to pray in sweat and tears as did our Master?

Lesson Aim: To learn from the way Jesus prepared His disciples and Himself for the crucifixion.

Theme Verse: [John 12:27](#). “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour, but for this cause came I unto this hour.”

Lesson Text.

In the Upper Room

[Matthew 26:20-29](#)

Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. ²¹And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. ²²And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? ²³And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. ²⁴The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. ²⁵Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

²⁶And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. ²⁷And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; ²⁸For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. ²⁹But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

On the Mount of Olives.

[Matthew 26:30-35](#)

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives. ³¹Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. ³²But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. ³³Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. ³⁴Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. ³⁵Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

In Gethsemane.

[Matthew 26:36-46](#)

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. ³⁷And he took

with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. ³⁸Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. ³⁹And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. ⁴⁰And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. ⁴²He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. ⁴³And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. ⁴⁵Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

Questions for Study

In the Upper Room

1. For what purpose did Jesus introduce the subject of His betrayal to all twelve disciples?
2. Why is it significant that Jesus instituted Communion at the Passover?

On the Mount of Olives

3. In what way would Jesus' disciples be offended because of Him that night?
4. How might we become guilty of denying our Lord?

In Gethsemane

5. List some sorrows that were pressing down upon our Lord.
6. What can we learn from Jesus going forth three times to pray?
7. List some aids for facing crises in our lives today.

Analyzing the Passage

Jesus was composed and in control as He "sat down with the twelve" (Matthew 26:20). There were two suppers on this night. The Lord's Supper was at the close of the Passover supper. "One of you shall betray me" (Matthew 26:21) caused each of the disciples to examine himself as they prepared to share in the Lord's Supper. "Woe unto that man by whom the

Son of man is betrayed!" (Matthew 26:24) was Christ's appeal to Judas's conscience.

The bread and wine were outward symbols of our Lord's death. "This is my body" (Matthew 26:26) and "this is my blood" (Matthew 26:28) shift the Passover focus of the redemption from Egypt to the redemption from sin accomplished by Jesus' death on the cross.

Jesus "began to be sorrowful and very heavy" (Matthew 26:37). This reveals the heart of Christ as He felt the weight of man's sin and His role in providing redemption. Cup (Matthew 26:39) is symbolic of the cross experience with all its attendant sufferings. The three periods of prayer (Matthew 26:39, 42, 44) reveal the intensity of this experience and provided divine enablement to Christ.

Principles and Applications

In the Upper Room

1. Christ prepared for the cross by having a special gathering with His twelve disciples (Matthew 26:20). This would be the last gathering of Jesus with all twelve disciples before His crucifixion. The events of the next hours would be dramatic, perplexing, and stressful. Jesus demonstrates a heart of love, compassion, and servitude as He shares with the twelve.

2. Christ prepared His disciples for- the involvements of cross bearing through soul-searching self-examination (Matthew 26:21-22). Within every one of us lies the potential to fail and to sink in defeat. Understanding and acknowledging our weakness moves us to rely on God alone for strength and victory. We should not be intimidated when a brother or sister in the church challenges us in some particular area of our life.

3. Christ provided for His disciples by instituting memorials of His death (Matthew 26:26-29). The Passover had served its purpose and would now give place to the new memorial supper, which was to be kept in loving remembrance of Jesus till He comes again. Observing this ordinance today enriches the life of the believer. If this special, meaningful service becomes a drudgery, then our relationship with Christ is lacking.

On the Mount of Olives

4. Christ prepared for the cross by engaging in song with His disciples (Matthew 26:30). Psalms 113-118, known as the Hallel (praise), were set to music and sung at specific times during the Passover feast. No doubt this is the hymn they sang. Many of the thoughts in Psalm 118 relate to Je-

sus' experience at this time. Hymns of faith, trust, and courage will lift our spirits heavenward in trying scenes of life.

5. Christ turned the minds of His disciples to the hope and power of the resurrection (Matthew 26:31-32). Beyond the failures, sorrows, and darkness of the hour lay a victory more glorious than they were able to understand. Jesus promised to go before them into Galilee after He was risen. What a strengthening, inspirational, and precious thought that this same Jesus will gently lead each faithful, trusting child of His safe home to heaven.

In Gethsemane

6. Christ prepared for the cross by gathering His disciples to the familiar retreat of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36). The word Gethsemane means "oil" - How fitting the name for this occasion! Jesus, pressed with sorrows and the weight of man's sin, resorts to the place where He often came for peace and quiet. One can clearly sense Christ' desire for the companionship, prayers, and watchfulness of His disciples. There is strength in togetherness.

7. Christ prepared Himself for the cross by putting the will of His Father ahead of His own desires (Matthew 26:39, 42, 44). A full surrender to the will of God removes the bitterness of the bitterest cup. Joy and delight are the rewards of such a life. To stubbornly hold on to our own whims and ideas will only take us deeper into despair, darkness, and defeat.

8. Christ prepared Himself for the cross by a willingness to face the cross alone (Matthew 26:42-45). The disciples were overcome with weariness and fatigue. Shortly they would forsake Him altogether, but Jesus kept His eyes on the cross. Are we intimidated by the cross today? Is the separated, stranger-and-pilgrim life too hard on our flesh? It is the way of the cross that leads home.

9. Christ prepared for the cross by moving forward in the face of conflict (Matthew 26:46). Jesus moved forth with deliberate steps. The hour was at hand for the Son of man to be betrayed, and He was prepared for it. We may be tempted to avoid conflict and run away from life's perplexities and hardships. To retreat will surely result in defeat. By the power of Christ, we can move forward.

Important Teachings

1. Christ prepared for the cross by having a special gathering with His twelve disciples (26:20).
2. Christ prepared His disciples for the involvements of cross bearing through soul-searching self-examination (Mathew 26:21-22).
3. Christ provided for His disciples by instituting memorials of His death (Mathew 26:26-29).
4. Christ prepared for the cross by engaging in song with His disciples (Mathew 26:30).
5. Christ turned the minds of His disciples to the hope and power of the resurrection (Mathew 26:31-32).
6. Christ prepared for the cross by gathering His disciples to the familiar retreat of Gethsemane (Mathew 26:36).
7. Christ prepared Himself for the cross by putting the will of His Father ahead of His own desires (Mathew 26:39, 42, 44).
8. Christ prepared Himself for the cross by a willingness to face the cross alone (Mathew 26:42-45).
9. Christ prepared for the cross by moving forward in the face of conflict (Mathew 26:46).

Answers to Questions

1. For what purpose did Jesus introduce the subject of His betrayal to all twelve disciples?

It was a soul-searching thought for all of them that one of them would be a traitor. Each was afraid for himself and asked, "Is it I?" Gracious souls grieve for the sins of others. It adds extra weight to our sorrow when one of close friendship betrays his Lord and Saviour.

2. Why is it significant that Jesus instituted Communion at the Passover?

Jesus observed and ate the Passover and then introduced in its place His own Supper. He Himself was slain as the paschal Lamb. He expired on the cross while the paschal lambs were being slain in the temple. The Passover had served its purpose and would now give place to the new memorial Supper, which was to be kept in loving remembrance of Jesus till He comes again.

3. In what way would Jesus' disciples be offended because of Him that night?

He, their Master and Leader, was about to be arrested and taken by the

scribes and chief priest. He, their Shepherd, would be smitten. This was contrary to their anticipation of an earthly kingdom.

4. How might we become guilty of denying our Lord?

We might deny our Lord by failing to share with seeking souls our testimony of peace and faith in Christ. By failing to defend truth when it is challenged, abused, and rejected, we likewise deny Him. Are we able to kindly challenge people who take the Lord's Name in vain? Failure to live a separated life is denying our Lord.

5. List some sorrows that were pressing down upon our Lord.

Jesus endured the slander and hostility of His enemies, being despised of men. His close friends had failed to watch and pray with Him as He had desired. Perhaps heaviest of all was the weight of the world's sin. "The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

6. What can we learn from Jesus going forth three times to pray?

There is great strength in persistent prayer. Jesus was not trying to change God's plan, but He was striving to be fully resigned to God's will for His life. This test became increasingly intense as the hour drew nigh. The greater the trial, the closer we need to draw to our Lord and Saviour. He never slumbers or sleeps.

7. List some aids for facing crises in our lines today.

The singing of a hymn has helped many a struggling believer draw nigh to God. We know that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. To be fully surrendered is a continual need. This requires much sacrifice and dying to the flesh daily on our part. Staying close to God's family is also very important.

Summarizing the Lesson

One can clearly see the conflict of the ages as Satan tries to defeat the Son of God. Momentarily it seemed that Satan was successful. But God, who is over all, was in full control. All of Satan's scheming fit right into God's eternal plan and purpose. "God moves in a mysterious way, / His wonders to perform.-

Research Guide

1. Carefully study the other three Gospel accounts of these same events.
2. Study the Old Testament Passover with all its rich symbolism.