

## The Gospel of Luke – Year 3

### Week 1– Chapter 18

### The Third Passion Prediction

**v28** *Then Peter said, “Look, we have left our homes and followed you.”* The disciples were astounded at Jesus’ words. The whole point is that something that was impossible for Abraham to do, to have a child at such an age, becomes a reality because nothing is impossible for God. Jesus continued, *“What is impossible for mortals is possible for God.”* This is the means of our salvation. God has done the work for us, on our behalf, for our salvation. The Bible gives examples from generation to generation of the human inclinations. When things go well, and there is prosperity and goodness in life, we tend to take credit for all the good that happens in our lives and forget about God. This was the pattern in the book of Judges and it is the pattern of all human history. In Judges, it was after God sent affliction, troubles and hardship, and neighboring countries to invade and oppress the people, that they finally remembered God. It was only when they recognized their inability to fix the problem that they began to look for help. They cried out to God and He sent a deliverer and saved them. Peter is astounded at Jesus’ words, but then begins to think about what they mean for the disciples. He says, *“We have left everything.”* Jesus tells him their reward will be great. Everything in this life and the next will be focused upon God.

**v29** *And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,<sup>30</sup> who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.”* A camel can go through the eye of a needle, but only if it is completely destroyed down to a cellular level. A rich man can enter the kingdom of heaven, but it is only by the complete destruction of everything attached to his identity. It is the death of the old sinful self. God then recreates us into a new creature, giving us a new birth, a new life as children of God. This is the work of God who changes us from the inside out that we may be conformed to the image of His likeness. For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible. In changing our hearts we have a new worldview and our priorities are completely rearranged. All those things we used to hold most dear are set aside for the sake of the kingdom. This is eternal life, to know the only true God and His Son whom He has sent. The price is very high. It costs us everything we used to value.

**v31** *Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.* Following the encounter with the rich man seeking eternal life, we are quickly approaching Palm Sunday and the end of the travel narrative that began in chapter 9. As they get closer to the goal, Jesus takes some time with the twelve to give a final preview of His purpose and the end result. This third passion prediction is much more immediate to the events about to happen.

**v32** *For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon.<sup>33</sup> After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again.”* This account is more detailed than the others. It does not explicitly name betrayal, but speaks of being, *“handed over to the Gentiles,”* the act of the religious leadership. It

makes clear the suffering while refuting all those who view the crucifixion as failure. Every element of the passion is a part of God's plan that has been prepared from the beginning. God is sovereign, in control of everything that happens. Jesus went to the cross with His eyes wide open to the reality of what He faced. He did so reluctantly, but willingly and intentionally, out of the depth of His love for us and in obedience to the Father. God does not desire the death of sinners, but that we turn to Him and live. It is made possible only because Jesus paid the penalty for sin and suffered the wrath of God in our place in order that our sins may be washed away. His blood is the covering for our guilt and shame.

**v34** *But they understood nothing about all these things; in fact, what he said was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.* Isaiah 52, in the verses leading into the 4<sup>th</sup> servant song, verse 10 says, "*The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*" It is right there for all to see and yet no one, not even the disciples can comprehend the foolishness of God.

**v35** *As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.* <sup>36</sup> *When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening.* We begin today with Jesus and the disciples approaching Jericho, having crossed the Jordan River and heading up to Jerusalem. Luke does not present a clear chronology, but this story of a blind man at this moment serves to provide the same message as we find in Mark. Jesus keeps telling the disciples what He is doing and what is going to happen and they simply cannot 'see' it. Might we consider that since the whole OT is designed with the purpose of giving a preview of the life and atoning work of Jesus, it would not be simply an accident or literary method that places these events. We should give some credit to God who is in control of all things such that the events in Jesus' life have a chronology that is a part of God's message and teaching for us all.

**v37** *They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."* <sup>38</sup> *Then he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"* He was sitting alongside the road near the city gate where beggars were often found. When he hears that it is Jesus passing by, he begins to shout. This is not a normal address, but a declaration that Jesus is the Messiah.

**v39** *Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"* He shouted even more loudly. He is in need, and this may be his only chance. He is going to do everything he can to get the attention of this healer.

**v40** *Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him,* <sup>41</sup> *"What do you want me to do for you?"* He said, *"Lord, let me see again."* <sup>42</sup> *Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has saved you."* <sup>43</sup> *Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.* Jesus responds in His usual manner. No matter how busy or how many other things are going on He takes time for those who are in need. His compassion for the sick never wavered. Here He is on the final leg of His journey, on the verge of the passion and all the suffering and pain that will go with it, and His compassion still does not waver. He stops and takes time to call him. As we are at the very end of His ministry, we might note that He does not tell him to be quiet, as He has told others earlier. These stories give notice of the disciples' blindness, and bring us back to our own blindness.

## Week 2– Chapter 19

## Zacchaeus/ The Ten Minas

**v1** *He entered Jericho and was passing through it.* We have already been introduced to Jericho in the previous story of the blind man, ‘As He approached Jericho.’ The journey continues to its goal in Jerusalem. Note also that the blind man, now healed, has joined the procession. Jericho is just 14 miles or so from Jerusalem.

**v2** *A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich.* We called chapter 15 ‘The Lost Chapter.’ The three parables were a response to 15:2, “*The Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”*” Now it is not just any tax collector but a chief tax collector, the worst of the worst.

**v3** *He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. <sup>4</sup>So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way.* Zacchaeus may have been wealthy, but as an outcast he was not happy. In a crowd he would likely be the target for anyone who knew him and his position, especially given his small stature. He had heard of Jesus and was determined to see Him, abandoning all dignity to run ahead and climb a tree.

**v5** *When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.”* But Jesus did not pass by. Jesus does not ask, simply telling him that He must stay at his house.

**v6** *So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him.* Here was a celebrity taking notice of him and even asking to be his guest. No one outside of his circle of other tax collectors had treated him this way for years.

**v7** *All who saw it began to grumble and said, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.”* The response of the religious leaders is unchanged and this suggests the more general complaint of the Jewish population who also hated these tax collectors and regarded them as traitors. Such interactions have become a regular source of complaint and controversy about Jesus. Luke 5:27 begins the call of Matthew. Here at the very end of Jesus’ ministry is a reminder of that event. At that time, we read of the reaction, “*The Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples*”

**v8** *Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.”* His announcement to Jesus is sudden and comes with no apparent prompting. His word reflects a change in heart and corresponds with Jesus’ teaching that the use of possessions is a significant indicator of one’s spiritual condition. The heart is not seen from outside or by anyone other than God, but there are indications that come from a person’s behavior.

**v9** *Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”* A radical change took place in his life. He did not sell all of his possessions, and Jesus makes no mention of the other half. (Remember the rich young man Jesus instructed to give away everything.) He pronounces a blessing and benediction upon him. There is no further mention of Zacchaeus in the Bible. Church history remembered him. Clement, the Bishop of

Alexandria, said that Zaccheus remained faithful becoming bishop of Caesarea. So this little man became a spiritual leader. Jesus' words restored him into the household of faith.

**v11** *As they were listening to this, he went on to tell a parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.* This is the final parable before Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Jesus is headed up to Jericho as The Passover celebration is quickly approaching. During this journey, walking uphill from Jericho, which was about 1000 feet below sea level to Jerusalem at about 2700 feet above sea level, a climb of nearly 4000 feet in those 17 miles. As he makes this journey, he addresses the anticipation of so many of the Jews in the crowd who were expecting the Kingdom of God to appear immediately.

**v12** *So he said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to get royal power for himself and then return."<sup>13</sup> He summoned ten of his slaves, and gave them ten pounds, and said to them, 'Do business with these until I come back.'<sup>14</sup> But the citizens of his country hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to rule over us.' The Parable presents the citizens of the country sending their own delegation to the far country to argue that they did not want this man ruling over them. When Archeleus traveled to Rome, the Jewish leadership sent their own delegation to Rome to tell Caesar they did not want him as their leader. Augustus ruled in Archeleus' favor, but about ten years later he was deposed and replaced by a Roman governor. During Jesus' ministry that was Pontius Pilate. Archeleus' on the first Passover as ruler killed 3000 Jewish enemies to intimidate the population and destroy opposition.*

**v15** *When he returned, having received royal power, he ordered these slaves, to whom he had given the money, to be summoned so that he might find out what they had gained by trading.* Many commentators view this as simply a variation on the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25, but there are enough differences in the stories to distinguish them.

**v16** *The first came forward and said, 'Lord, your pound has made ten more pounds.'<sup>17</sup> He said to him, 'Well done, good slave! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small thing, take charge of ten cities.'<sup>18</sup> Then the second came, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made five pounds.'<sup>19</sup> He said to him, 'And you, rule over five cities.'<sup>20</sup> Then the other came, saying, 'Lord, here is your pound. I wrapped it up in a piece of cloth,<sup>21</sup> for I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man; you take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' This parable describes three types of people. There are the general citizens who reject the ruler outright. Among his servants, some are faithful and others are not.*

**v22** *He said to him, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked slave! You knew, did you, that I was a harsh man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow?<sup>23</sup> Why then did you not put my money into the bank? Then when I returned, I could have collected it with interest.'<sup>24</sup> He said to the bystanders, 'Take the pound from him and give it to the one who has ten pounds.'<sup>25</sup> (And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten pounds!')<sup>26</sup> 'I tell you, to all those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.<sup>27</sup> But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and slaughter them in my presence.'"* This last parable includes God's grace with blessings and the wrath of judgment. There is justice and mercy.

### **Year 3: Week 3– Chapter 19**

### ***Palm Sunday/ The Entry into Jerusalem***

**v28** *After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.* This brings us to the end of the travel narrative and the beginning of Holy Week. It begins with the triumphal entrance into the city of Jerusalem, at a moment when the crowds are all approaching for the beginning of the week of unleavened bread leading to the celebration of Passover. Some call it Jesus' coronation procession. In the healing of the blind man in Jericho, Baritmaeus called to Jesus saying, "*Son of David, have mercy on me.*" It is a Messianic title, the promised one of Israel, who would come to reestablish the throne of His father David. In that sense, this is not the coronation the people wanted, because that is not what He has come to do. It does lead us to look more at what the OT offers to help understand Jesus' identity and role in salvation history. The year given for Jerusalem being established as the Capital of Israel is 1000 bc. David ruled Israel for 40 years, the first 7 in Hebron and then 33 in Jerusalem. If this chronology is right, Solomon became king in 967, and the year given for Jesus' crucifixion is between 30 and 33ad, the later being exactly 1000 after Solomon's coronation. In 1 Kings 1, we have the story of the struggle for the succession of David. David had not yet died, but he was frail and bedridden. His son Adonijah presumed to take the throne for himself and set up his own coronation ceremony. As the festivities are going on, Nathan the prophet and Bathsheba come into David to tell him of the events with the question, "*Did you not say that Solomon would succeed you?*" He had, and so David gave them instructions for the inauguration and coronation of Solomon. Read 1 Kings 1:38-40 for the account.

**v29** *When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples,* <sup>30</sup> *saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here.* <sup>31</sup> *If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'* " <sup>32</sup> *So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them.* <sup>33</sup> *As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?"* <sup>34</sup> *They said, "The Lord needs it."* This scene sets the tone for all of the events during this week. Some commentators connect this account to Jacob's blessing of Judah in Genesis 49:11, "*Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vestures in the blood of grapes.*" They are not chance occurrences of happenstance. Jesus, along with His heavenly Father, is fully in control of everything taking place according to the divine plan established from the beginning. This is the sovereignty of God on full display.

**v35** *Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.* <sup>36</sup> *As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road.* <sup>37</sup> *As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen,* <sup>38</sup> *saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"* We know that a large procession followed Jesus from Jericho, but this crowd was swelled by all the people coming for the festival apart from the entourage around Jesus. They would all have heard to shouts of "*Hosanna to the Son of David.*" Psalm 118 is known as the Hallel, a festival psalm for pilgrimage to Jerusalem on the tabernacles

and Passover. 118:25 says, *"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"* They are used to huge crowds for these festival celebrations, but this stirs all, throwing the city into turmoil and a great commotion. This is no ordinary Passover.

**v39** *Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop."* <sup>40</sup> *He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."* Some of the Pharisees in the crowd recognize the political implications of this event. They are afraid of where this might lead. In the prophet Habakkuk 2:11 we read, *"For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork respond."* In Deuteronomy 30:19, when establishing the covenant with Israel, God tells the Israelites, *"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice and holding fast to him."* Nothing can prevent the witness to the glory of God in Jesus. As Isaiah 52:10 says, *"The Lord has bared His holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."*

**v41** *As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it,* <sup>42</sup> *saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes."* <sup>43</sup> *Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side.* <sup>44</sup> *They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.* Jesus' ministry began with His first synagogue message back in chapter 4 reading from Isaiah 61. The work of the first coming of the Messiah is all tied into establishing peace between God and sinful humanity. It is the work of reconciliation, paying the penalty for sin and making of us a new creation. His years of traveling proclaiming the message and bringing healing to people was a clear demonstration of God's love and desire for His children. All that work an effort for peace has been met with opposition and hostility. With that ministry drawing to its close His words of lament express grief for all those who refuse to listen. It also hints at the coming destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD.

**v45** *Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there;* <sup>46</sup> *and he said, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer'; but you have made it a den of robbers."* <sup>47</sup> *Every day he was teaching in the temple. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people kept looking for a way to kill him;* <sup>48</sup> *but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were spellbound by what they heard.* 1 Kings 8:27 begins Solomon's dedicatory prayer for the Temple. These specific words are from Isaiah 56:6-7. Initially the work of trading animals for those who came to Jerusalem was a benefit to pilgrims, especially those who came from a distance. They would not have to bring their own animal from a great distance. Soon, the benefit became an opportunity for the religious leaders to run a monopoly system charging predatory prices. The business center in the Court of the Gentiles at this time was known as the Bazaar of Annas. He was the High Priest deposed by the Romans. His son-in-law Caiaphas was the official High Priest but many Jews still recognized Annas' authority and influence. Between them, Annas and Caiaphas ran the commercial enterprise and sold franchises to those who did the buying and selling and took a cut of the profits.

## **Year 3: Week 4– Chapter 20**

## ***Holy Week – Teaching in the Temple***

**v1** *One day, as he was teaching the people in the temple and telling the good news, the chief priests and the scribes came with the elders <sup>2</sup> and said to him, “Tell us, by what authority are you doing these things? Who is it who gave you this authority?”* It is the Chief Priest and Elders who come and confront Him, asking about His authority. The Herodians, the Sadducees and scribes will follow them. This confrontation with authorities continues into the beginning of the next chapter where Jesus observes the widow giving her last coins into the treasury.

**v3** *He answered them, “I will also ask you a question, and you tell me: <sup>4</sup> Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?”* The religious leaders have lived and grown up in a system of authority. The right to make decisions and direct the operation of the temple has been given based on credentials and faithfulness to the leadership in their years of service. They had earned these positions of authority. How could this outsider simply walk in and disrupt everything they had put in place? If Jesus says bluntly that it is His own authority they would immediately arrest Him for blasphemy. Instead He puts them in a bind over their response to John the Baptist.

**v5** *They discussed it with one another, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why did you not believe him?’ <sup>6</sup> But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ all the people will stone us; for they are convinced that John was a prophet.”* Since their question is about authority, then what is their take on John? Did his authority come from God, or from human origin? The point is for these religious leaders to either confirm or deny that John was a true prophet. Beyond their own hostility to John, they cannot acknowledge John’s divine authority without affirming Jesus. The general consensus among the people is that John was a prophet. Consider Herod’s opinion in Matthew 14:5. To publicly express their rejection of John, would risk alienating the crowds further, but acceptance would require them to take John’s words as the prophetic words of God.

**v7** *So they answered that they did not know where it came from. <sup>8</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”* This is humiliating, yet now they are publicly saying the words, “We do not know.” The gospels make clear that Jesus’ authority is not through human advancement and achievement. His authority is from His Father, from His identity as God’s Son and author of creation. He has a right to do what He wants, to do righteousness in the temple because He is the Lord of the Temple.

**v9** *He began to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard, and leased it to tenants, and went to another country for a long time. In Matthew 21 Jesus tells three parables in a row directed at the religious leaders who challenged His authority. This is the 2nd and only one of those three in Luke. It is a description of the religious leadership, who had just questioned Jesus’ authority. It is helpful to begin with its origin rooted in the OT prophetic writings. This parable of judgment is similar to a story found in Isaiah 5.*

**v10** *When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants in order that they might give him his share of the produce of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>11</sup> Next he sent another slave; that one also they beat and insulted and sent away empty-handed. <sup>12</sup> And he sent still a third; this one also they wounded and threw out. Isaiah’s*

vineyard story was focused upon the people of Israel and their sin. In both Matthew and Mark the opening imagery includes the same as the OT story. Here it is simply the absentee landowner.

**v13** *Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.'* <sup>14</sup> *But when the tenants saw him, they discussed it among themselves and said, 'This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours.'* <sup>15</sup> *So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?* Jesus describes the patience and longsuffering of the owner. He is describing God, sending His prophets and the treatment they received. Rather than listen, the Israelites and in particular the leaders of Israel, treated them despicably, with rejection and abuse. In the other accounts it includes murder. That was the history of Israel for over 1000 years. Now the last option has come with the owner (God) sending His Son. With these final words Jesus is accusing them of seeking His death. They still do not recognize themselves in the story.

**v16** *He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When they heard this, they said, "Heaven forbid!"* He tells the story to the people, those many religious pilgrims on hand for The Passover. Appalled at the idea of such evil tenants the crowd reacts to the story saying, "Heaven forbid!"

**v17** *But he looked at them and said, "What then does this text mean: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'?"* <sup>18</sup> *Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."* Jesus now places before them words from Psalm 118, known as a Hallel, a celebration psalm for procession into the festival. Look at the Psalm especially verses 22 and 26. Isaiah 8:13-14 and 28:16, also play into Jesus' wording.

**v19** *When the scribes and chief priests realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people.* It is only with the clear statement of the meaning of this parable, and a recounting of the OT words that the religious leaders clearly perceive that Jesus is talking directly about them. They go to the back rooms to continue their planning in secret. Judas will supply them with the advantage they need.

**v20** *So they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be honest, in order to trap him by what he said, so as to hand him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor.* The previous attack on His authority had come from the Chief Priests and elders. They left when they understood Jesus had exposed their hypocrisy. While they retreat to plot, they send representatives of the different religious parties who pose questions in an attempt to entrap Jesus.

**v21** *So they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you are right in what you say and teach, and you show deference to no one, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth."* <sup>22</sup> *Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?"* They begin with words that speak of Jesus as sincere, but their flattery could not be more insincere. They speak integrity, and devotion to truth, but their plotting shows no regard for His integrity. They say it only as a means to ensure Jesus provides an answer. There is nothing but malice in everything they are doing, and we can recognize that their plans to kill Jesus are well under way.



**v23** *But he perceived their craftiness and said to them,* <sup>24</sup> *“Show me a denarius. Whose head and whose title does it bear?” They said, “The emperor’s.”* We know the famous movie line, *“Show me the money!”* Jesus’ request was more subtle but it’s the same thing. He asked to see the coin that was used to pay the Roman tax. They were standing in the temple, and part of the job of the moneychangers, whose tables Jesus had overturned earlier, was as a currency exchange so that the money for offerings within the temple were not idolatrous. The Roman coins of the emperor Tiberius had inscribed on it the words *Divus et Pontifex Maximus* (“God and High Priest”), thus these coins that were used in everyday commerce were viewed as idolatrous. Any righteous religious leader would avoid such coins and certainly not bring one into the Temple. There were Jewish coins that could be used for offerings in the temple, but when Jesus asks to see this coin for tax, one of these religious leaders has one to show him.

**v25** *He said to them, “Then give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”* Jesus then asks, *“whose head”* or whose image and inscription is on the coin? Jesus connects image to ownership. In other words, whose coin is this? It is used for currency, but the image implies that Caesar authorized the minting and is honored by its use under his rule. As Christians, we connect the use of the word image or likeness with the creation story. Read Genesis 1:26-27. They recognize and acknowledge Caesar’s image, which Jesus used to imply the ownership of the ruling authority, and the obligation to pay their taxes. Jesus’ words did not end with the matter of the tax. He continued adding, *“Give to God the things that are God’s.”* Consider the implications of that statement.

**v26** *And they were not able in the presence of the people to trap him by what he said; and being amazed by his answer, they became silent.* The religious leaders, when they hear Jesus’ words, marveled and left Him and went their way. It is back to plotting other means.

**v27** *Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him* The opposition to Jesus created strange bedfellows. The Pharisees and Herodians approached Jesus about paying taxes to Caesar. Waiting in line for the next attempt to entrap Jesus were the Sadducees. This party was most closely identified with leadership in the Temple. They controlled the Temple and enjoyed the wealth that flowed from all the business in and around the temple, in at least tacit complicity with the Romans. That difference contributed to their different approaches to scripture. The Sadducees accepted only the Torah as the word of God. Resurrection was rejected because it is not explicitly mentioned in the Torah, even though there are hints at it in the sacrifice of Isaac and the Joseph story (Read Daniel 12:2-3).

**v28** *and asked him a question, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.”* <sup>29</sup> *Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; <sup>30</sup> then the second <sup>31</sup> and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. <sup>32</sup> Finally the woman also died. <sup>33</sup> In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her.”* This draws on the Torah, and the idea of ‘levirate marriage’ that is

introduced in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. This served as a welfare system in the Jewish community, where the family took care of the widow, by helping to provide a son and heir to provide for her wellbeing. It is also about responsibility within the family for the sake of the community.

**v34** *Jesus said to them, "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; <sup>35</sup>but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. <sup>36</sup>Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.* The question could have been posed with just two husbands, but this is about ridicule. This example of seven husbands, all brothers, with no children produced served to mock the Pharisees' theology of the resurrection, along with Jesus. Jesus presents two problems with their logic, but in Matthew 22:29 He prefaced that with a sharp criticism of their whole position. First, the resurrection life is one of transformation into new bodies that do not procreate. This hits the Pharisees understanding as well. Jesus makes the point that there is already a model for this: the angels. Since the Sadducees do not believe in angels either, this is another critic of their theology (Acts 23:8). Consider the story in Genesis 18 in light of this. This is a troublesome thought for many Christians, even though the traditional vows say, "Till death do us part." In heaven, there is love and community, but it is distinct from what we know on earth, and one should explore the theology of the church, which is known as 'the bride of Christ.'

**v37** *And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. <sup>38</sup>Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive." <sup>39</sup>Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." <sup>40</sup>For they no longer dared to ask him another question.* This is really the main point. He quotes Exodus 3:6 where God speaks to Moses at the burning bush. The use of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob also points to the covenant God made with Abraham and which was restated to both Isaac and Jacob. It is an eternal covenant, and while the covenant of marriage ends with death, God's covenant with His chosen people has no end. We are to see it as a better covenant, pointing to an eternal relationship with God that death cannot hinder or destroy (Hebrews 7:21-22; 12:22-24). The resurrection of the body as a central tenant of our Christian faith, intimately connected to Jesus' own resurrection from the dead. Jesus' answer brings out the hidden meaning behind scriptures that seemed obscure to people in the past. We may feel that lack of clarity as we read the scriptures, but one of the wonders of Christian faith is the way in which God opens our hearts and minds to see and to know God's truth that is hidden from those who do not believe.

**v41** *Then he said to them, "How can they say that the Messiah is David's son? <sup>42</sup>For David himself says in the book of Psalms, "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, <sup>43</sup>until I make your enemies your footstool." ' <sup>44</sup>David thus calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?"* They have sought to trap Jesus but in this moment He turns the tables again with a question beyond their understanding. The Jewish Messianic hope was a descendant of David to reestablish the throne and restore Israel to the glory (2 Samuel 7:12, 16). He asks them a question about Psalm 110. They presumed a father was always greater his son.

## Year 3: Week 6– Chapter 20

## Holy Week – Counterattack

**v41(cont)** Yahweh said to my Adonai, “*Sit at my right hand.*” The Father promised to install the Son at His right hand as the King of Kings and as Lord of Lords. The implication of the psalm is that David understood that his son, the Messiah, would be King over all things, including David himself. Jesus is pushing these religious leaders to understand their view of the Messiah was far too little. They were looking for a king like David to establish an earthly kingdom greater than other kingdoms. Jesus is telling them the Messiah is not a human conqueror, but a sovereign Lord who would be exalted to the right hand of the Father. Without saying He is the Son of Man or the Son of David, He is challenging the crowds and all who are listening to Him to consider how the Bible identifies the Messiah. In Daniel 7, One like a Son of Man is presented before the Ancient of Days, and is given all authority and power and honor and glory, or to summarize, all things are under Him. They wanted someone to attack the Romans, but they got someone who is attacking sin and evil and establishing the Kingdom of God. This day began when these leaders challenged Jesus asking, “*By what authority are you doing these things?*” At the end, He has answered that question, but they are unable to perceive it. He is the Father’s unique Son and He has the authority to exercise His messianic ministry.

**v45** *In the hearing of all the people he said to the disciples, <sup>46</sup> “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets. <sup>47</sup> They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”* Jesus addresses the role of the religious leaders in the life of the Israelites. They sit on Moses’ seat, and teach the Law. In Matthew, Jesus tells them, “*Therefore one should listen to them and learn from them what is in the scriptures. But, do not follow their practice.*” It is another reminder of their hypocrisy and the false religion of those who are not interested in leading others to God, but only gaining as much for themselves as they can. The Bible often criticized the religious leaders (Jeremiah 23). They were condemned for using that position to take advantage of others for personal gain. We should note that those final words included the ‘*devouring of widows’ houses.*’ Those words are directly connected to the things Jesus observes in the next few verses.

## Chapter 21

**v1** *He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; <sup>2</sup> he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. <sup>3</sup> He said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; <sup>4</sup> for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.”* How do we view this woman? Is she a model for our own giving, or is she an example of the victims of the religious system? There is reason to suspect the whole money system of the temple hierarchy. Who gathers the money? Sources tell us there were 13 trumpet shaped receptacles in the court of the women where people gave their money. There were many different things they could give money too, including the poor, but also for incense, wood, gold, or any items that might be needed for the activities in the temple. It would be legitimate to question how much given for the poor went to the poor, even as today we are warned to consider how much money

given to a charity goes to administrative costs, and how much to actually help with the cause of concern. Much of this was false religion, corrupt and wretched that convinced people they were doing something to earn favor with God when all it was doing was enriching the religious leaders. Jeremiah's prophecy of the shepherds aptly applies. This is the abuse and devouring of widows! The Bible does call for a tithe, and Jesus did tell the rich young man to sell everything. We should consider that everything we have belongs to God. But we should also understand that the tithe sets a portion, leaving the rest as the means for us to take care of ourselves. If we understand our bodies to be a temple of the Holy Spirit, then Christian stewardship includes taking care of ourselves in order that we may help others. (Micah 3:1; 6:8)

**v5** *When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, <sup>6</sup>“As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.”* We enter into Jesus' final discourse before events of the Passion. His 'Eschatological Discourse' has to do with the 'last things,' in regard to Jerusalem and to the world. It is also described as 'Apocalyptic' in that it provides revelation or the disclosure of things that are to come. We have noted Luke's inattention to chronology. This lesson begins with the word 'when.' Because Jesus was in the Temple by the treasury in the previous verse, many commentators simply assume Jesus giving this instruction while still in the Temple. In Mark, this same discourse is prefaced with the words, *“As He came out of the Temple...”* From my own experience in Jerusalem, I would find it more likely to have such a discussion from outside the structure where one can feel overwhelmed by its full size and dimensions. Herod's Temple was under construction from 19BC until 63AD. To give some sense of what they were looking at, these were white limestone, some weighing over 100 tons. While there were many smaller stones (still large) the largest was around 45ft x 16ft x 12ft, and estimated to weigh 567 to 628 tons. We can marvel at the engineering feat this was to quarry and move these stones into place to construct this building. It is no wonder that the disciples were commenting on it as they walk by such massive building blocks.

**v7** *They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” <sup>8</sup>And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is near!’ Do not go after them.* This foreshadows what seems unimaginable to the disciples that this impressive structure will be brought down in the midst of an imminent war. The disciples were dumbfounded at this news, struggling to comprehend what this is all about. They were looking for Jesus to come into power and reclaim the status and prestige of the kingdom for the Jews. They expected the temple would continue to be a centerpiece of the glory of the new kingdom. We are reminded that even after Jesus' death and resurrection, their mindset in favor of Jesus' establishment of an earthly kingdom remained.

**v9** *“When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.” <sup>10</sup>Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; <sup>11</sup>there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.* The difficulties of this section are evident. We trust in God's plans for the future.

## Year 3: Week 7– Chapter 21

## Holy Week – The End Times Discourse

**v9 -Cont** From verse 5 onward this is a very difficult passage. While much of the material in the parallel passages in Mark 13 and Matthew 24 is very difficult to distinguish between events anticipating the fall of Jerusalem (70AD) and the end times, Luke makes a more intentional break with verses 25-28. Verse 9 includes a further clarification when it says, *“the end will not follow immediately.”*

**v12** *“But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name.* All of the disciples except John met a martyr’s death, and even John suffered persecution with forced labor on the Island of Patmos. The Roman government did not become hostile to Christianity until the 60s AD following the fire in Rome that Nero blamed on the Christians.

**v13** *This will give you an opportunity to testify.* This is our purpose. We are the Priesthood of All Believers. See Acts 1:8 and Colossians 1:5-6.

**v14** *So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; <sup>15</sup>for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict.* This is not an excuse for laziness when it comes to the study and learning of scripture. God promises to be with us and help us, even as He calls us to be faithful. (John 8:31-33; John 17:3)

**v16** *You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. <sup>17</sup>You will be hated by all because of my name. <sup>18</sup>But not a hair of your head will perish. <sup>19</sup>By your endurance you will gain your souls.* The primary cause of Christian persecution is that the Word of God comes to us as both law and gospel. In order to recognize our need for the gospel, that is, our need to be forgiven, we must first hear the law that accuses and condemns sin. It is this accusation that leads to persecution. People do not like to be told they are sinners, and will attack those who speak the truth. The call to faith is a call to confess Jesus Christ as our Lord. It is to do so not just when it is convenient. True faith calls for steadfast trust even when it becomes difficult and results in suffering or death. It is not that by withstanding suffering we earn salvation, but that such endurance is a mark of true faith. The end can mean either the end of the persecution or the end of our life on earth. In God’s hands we have nothing to fear.

**v20** *“When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. <sup>21</sup>Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must leave it, and those out in the country must not enter it; <sup>22</sup>for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfillment of all that is written. <sup>23</sup>Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress on the earth and wrath against this people; <sup>24</sup>they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.* Jesus continues with events that seem much more contemporary to the time of His death and resurrection. He begins with mention of *“The abomination of desolation”* that had been spoken of by the prophet Daniel (9:26-27). Jewish scholars in the time of Jesus associated this with Antiochus Epiphanes, the Selucid ruler, who conquered

Jerusalem, and in 168BC erected a pagan altar in the temple. He then sacrificed a pig in the Holy Place. Other events that led to rebellion and eventually to the Jewish War included the Emperor Gaius in 40AD, just a few years after Jesus' death and resurrection, ordering that a statue of himself be built and placed within the Temple, but Gaius died before his orders could be fulfilled. In 66AD the Jews rebelled against the Romans prompting a military response. The Roman army under Vespasian entered the Galilean territory from the north, destroying cities and villages in his path on the march toward Jerusalem. As the army progressed, most of the Jews who fled before them headed for Jerusalem to take refuge within its walls. While the Jews followed this normal practice, seeking shelter in the most fortified city, the early Christians in Galilee and Judea did flee to the hills as Jesus' words in this text warned them to do. The weight of all of these words is to impress upon the disciples and His followers in the early church the hardships that were to come. It was a warning so that they would be prepared for the disaster and make their escape. It impresses upon all who read these words the severity of the disaster that would come upon Israel and the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish community in the years shortly after Jesus' life and ministry. His words at the beginning of this chapter give horrifying detail to the prediction made, *"not one stone will be left upon another."* The trampling of Jerusalem, *"until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled"*, seen from our perspective provide a significant time frame in which we might talk about Jerusalem's history over the last 2000 years. It has been trampled under Gentile feet until just the last few decades.

**v25** *"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. <sup>26</sup>People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.* These words might be associated with the destruction and abomination of desolation. However great that calamity, historians would argue it was not the worst suffering seen on earth before or since. This seems to point ahead to a later end-time such that many associated these words with the great tribulation described in Revelation chapter 7-19. Jesus' words of these cosmic portents tell us that His coming again in glory will mean the end of our world and the universe as we know it. It will be a truly cataclysmic event, but even then I add that this is not certain. It is Jesus' final self-disclosure. Theologically the best way to describe this is as the full consummation of the Kingdom of God. These words echo those of the OT prophet in Isaiah in 13:10 and 34:4.

**v27** *Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup>Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."* This picture of Jesus contrasts sharply with the image of His suffering and humiliation on the cross, even though that is the reality that looms over the moment of this discourse. While we are used to Jesus referring to Himself as the 'Son of Man' that title in this moment echoes the image of the superhuman or divine figure of Daniel 7:13-14.

**v29** *Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; <sup>30</sup>as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. An analogy from common observation, when the twigs get tender, summer is near.*

## **Year 3: Week 8- Chapter 21**

## **Holy Week – Olivet; Judas**

**v31** *So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. <sup>32</sup> Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place.*

<sup>33</sup> *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.* Jesus has been addressing, at least in part, the disciples' request for a sign of these things in Luke 21:7, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?" In verse 32 what is meant by the word, 'generation?' Critics of Christianity say that it must mean a period of 20-40 years. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD would fit within that time frame, but so many of the other descriptions do not. Many of these words have implied a nearness to the events described. Yet the primary event we focus on is the return of Christ in His glory, now delayed 2000 years. Since Jesus announced the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and then gave the announcement of the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven before 'this generation,' it seems impossible to make this long separation. One attempt to reconcile this is to translate generation as 'race' and applying that to the Jewish people. The fig tree illustration seems to point to the relationship between 'these things' and 'it is near.' It would be far easier for everyone if Jesus had made the statement about 'this generation' after the words that apply most directly to the events in Jerusalem of 70 AD and before the talk of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. In v34, Jesus asserts the certainty of His words. In Mark's account of this teaching Jesus' next words are, "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Thus as I read this text and find myself at a loss to understand and make sense of Jesus' words, I wonder at how little I know. My ignorance is such that I cannot begin to complain about Jesus' words. The problem is not in what Jesus said, but my lack of comprehension.

**v34** *"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, <sup>35</sup> like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup> Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."* The emphasis in these last teaching words of Jesus prior to the crucifixion is the suddenness of events. There is nothing subtle in the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. It will be unmistakable in a manner that no mortal could imitate. We act in ignorance and complacency. We look at death as far off and go about our daily business, following our own desires. We are not willing to listen to God, who warns us, and prepares us for what is to come.

**v37** *Every day he was teaching in the temple, and at night he would go out and spend the night on the Mount of Olives, as it was called. <sup>38</sup> And all the people would get up early in the morning to listen to him in the temple.* This is called the Mount Olivet Discourse because of that image of Jesus and the disciples looking over the Kidron Valley upon the Temple complex. He did not stay within the walls of the city, but retreated to the east. We do not know if the group stayed out under the stars every night as they were doing on Thursday night. That may have been their practice and the reason Judas could lead them to this place. I had often thought of them as staying with Lazarus, Mary and Martha at night. More

recently I have read a commentary that suggested Jesus would avoid their place because of those seeking to arrest Jesus. John 11 tells us they would have liked to kill Lazarus as well. Wherever they stayed among the crowds of people and likely tent cities spread out around Jerusalem for the festival, each morning it was back to the Temple.

## **Chapter 22**

**v1** *Now the festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was near. <sup>2</sup> The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Jesus to death, for they were afraid of the people.* Jesus stressed the urgency of being ready. He knew the time for His passion was upon him. There is one more little detail Luke wants to share before getting to the Passover. The level of hatred for Jesus among the religious leaders has reached its apex. They are set on His destruction, but are fearful because of the crowds that have surrounded Jesus.

**v3** *Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve; <sup>4</sup> he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers of the temple police about how he might betray him to them.* Attention turns to Judas who has become disillusioned after 3 years of following Jesus. While we do not fully know or understand his motivation, there are hints of contributing factors. His role as treasurer and notes in the text that he was taking money for himself contribute to the financial motivation after viewing what he considered the wanton waste of the ointment. Jesus' passion predictions and particularly the words of the Mt Olivet Discourse that make clear this visit to Jerusalem is not the expected triumphal climax. Some speculate Judas might have thought he could force Jesus' action by handing him over to the religious authorities.

**v5** *They were greatly pleased and agreed to give him money. <sup>6</sup> So he consented and began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present.* The agreed price for Judas' actions is thirty pieces of silver. The amount is considered to be the traditional market price. Two OT passages are related to this, Exodus 21:32 and Zechariah 11. The suggestion is an added humiliation in that Jesus is betrayed for what might be considered a paltry sum. Luke describes a conspiracy, no longer concerned about the law, but simply set upon doing everything necessary to get rid of Jesus. The emphasis is on using stealth, since they are afraid of the crowds. They desire to kill Him, but know they must be careful about how they go about it. John 11:47-50 has a longer account of this. It is not a surprise that we have insights into these secret meetings because there were those among the leadership that did eventually become a part of the early church. As much as they wanted to kill Jesus, they said, "*Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.*" It is in these details that again God is clearly seen at work in His sovereignty over everything that takes place. They do not want the death during the Passover Festival, yet this is the appropriate time for the sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God. God would decide the time of the death of His Son, not the holy men of Israel. They are viewed as holy men, but the actions resemble the plotting of mafia chieftains. Their purpose was not to uphold the law and justice, but to subvert it in order to destroy what they viewed as the enemy, by any means possible. Jesus came to destroy the true enemy, sin, death and the power of the devil by the one means necessary.



## Year 3: Week 9– Chapter 22

## Holy Week – The Last Supper

**v7** *Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.* This is the starting point of the passion narrative, the events that run from Maundy Thursday through Good Friday. Exodus 12 describes the meal.

**v8** *So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it.”<sup>9</sup> They asked him, “Where do you want us to make preparations for it?”* We began chapter 22 with the plot of the chief priests with Judas and the conspiracy to kill Jesus. There is speculation concerning the vague description that Jesus gives to Peter and John as to where they are headed. Commentators suggest that Jesus does not use a name so the location remains hidden from Judas in order that the betrayal cannot happen until they have eaten the meal together.

**v10** *“Listen,” he said to them, “when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters<sup>11</sup> and say to the owner of the house, ‘The teacher asks you, ‘Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’”<sup>12</sup> He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there.”<sup>13</sup> So they went and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.*

This is a significant task as they must not only prepare the room, but get together everything that is needed for the meal. The Seder meal takes a considerable amount of planning and shopping to obtain all the specific items necessary for following the script of the Seder Haggadah. For the disciples, this preparation included the proper preparation of the lamb that would need to be purchased to be slaughtered by the priests at the Temple and one would guess, a significant time waiting in line with others going through the same procedure. The Seder was no longer observed at home. Since the time of King Josiah and his reforms every Jew was required to observe the Sabbath in Jerusalem, with the priest sacrificing the lambs. Scholars believe there was a division among the Jews, with Galilean Jews sacrificing the animals on the 14<sup>th</sup>, and eating them that evening, after 6pm at the start of the Passover. Judean and other Jews may have practiced a day as we do, sunrise to sunset, and sacrificed at 3pm for a meal the next night, still considered by them as the 15<sup>th</sup>. The priestly class is thought to have agreed to this in order to ease the burden of slaughtering all of the lambs in the short span of a few hours, and by this means able to sacrifice ½ one day and the other ½ the next. Josephus reports that in 40AD there were 250,000 lambs sacrificed in the Temple for Passover.

**v14** *When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him.<sup>15</sup> He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;<sup>16</sup> for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”* When evening came they gathered in the room and the meal began. There is no doubt that all three synoptic gospels present this as the Passover Meal. In John’s gospel, we have Jesus’ dying at three in the afternoon on Friday, at the exact time the Passover Lambs are being slaughtered. The disciples may have assumed they know all that will take place in the coming hours. This is a regular ritual that follows a script with very little variation from year to year. From these few words, Jesus will move directly into the meal. Luke’s account is brief, providing less detail than the others. Some commentators have suggested this is because Luke was a

Gentile writing about a Passover observance 30 years in the past, while the others were all Jews who had lived with this meal as the most important event in their life every year.

**v17** *Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; <sup>18</sup>for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."* There are four cups of wine. This is still in the preliminary liturgy, before they eat the meal. While the modern Seder practice was shaped after the time of Christ, the Jewish community after the 1<sup>st</sup> century would not have wanted to do anything to encourage Christian practice or teaching, but would include things that were important to maintain the connection with the original Seder practiced in the time of the temple when all the lambs were slaughtered in the Temple.

**v19** *Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* We do not know when in the meal Jesus would have taken the bread and diverted from the normal liturgy of the Haggadah. Most evidence suggests after the meal, when they have already eaten of the lamb. Here in Luke we are given just the simple introduction before moving directly into the words of institution that marks the initiation of the new covenant. They are simple words, but the debate over what they mean marks some of the most contentious on going theological battles in the church today.

**v20** *And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.* It is the blood of the new covenant, that establishes a new and wonderful basis for our relationship with God through our one intercessor even Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the great high priest, and at the same time, the once for all sacrifice for our sins. For all the significant differences in understanding even among Protestants, they are united in understanding that the sacrament is effective through faith. That is, we receive what Jesus' words say when we believe that they are true.

**v21** *But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. <sup>22</sup>For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!"*

<sup>23</sup> *Then they began to ask one another which one of them it could be who would do this.*

The meal is bracketed by the disciple's failure. The text highlights that failure from the least, Judas, to the greatest, Peter, even as Jesus is giving of himself in self-sacrifice for their sake and ours. It is a reminder that Jesus goes to the cross for us, not because of how good or deserving we are, but in fact precisely because of how bad we are and how much we need His redemption and forgiveness. He literally gives His body and blood for us, suffering death in order that we might live.

**v24** *A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest.* After three passion predictions including a previous argument over greatness, here are the disciples at the supper, mere hours from Jesus' arrest and crucifixion arguing again about greatness. In Luke 4:13 we read that Satan, "*departed from Him until an opportune time.*" This is certainly an opportune time when struggles become severe. The pride of these followers is evident in their desire for positions of power and glory in the new kingdom they still anticipate. They have turned a shocking announcement of betrayal into this pride-fest. Jesus interrupts and describes the ways of the world.

## Year 3: Week 10– Chapter 22

## Holy Week – Greatness and Denial

**v25** *But he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors.* The announcement of betrayal and denial is followed by the disciples’ self-centered pride and egos. Jesus interrupts them to describe once more the ways of the world. We know all too well Lord Achton’s words, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” The history of the world is filled with countless stories of those who have sought to impose their will on others. St. Augustine in describing the great sin of the Roman Empire called it the *Libido Dominandi*. It is the lust for power, or the desire not only to tell other people what to do but coveting the power and ability to impose that will.

**v26** *But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves.* Throughout the Bible there are contrasts drawn between the ways of this world and the path of faithfulness to God. 1 Samuel 8 provides God’s warning for the Israelites who desired, “A king like other nations.” The whole chapter gives a description of the rulers of this world. Repeatedly during His ministry Jesus taught the opposite message, telling His followers that He came to serve, not to be served and to give His life a ransom for many. His call to discipleship is a call to follow the model of their master, serving others in love rather than lording over them any kind of spiritual superiority.

**v27** *For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.* The answer seems obvious. The one at the table is served by the lesser, yet Jesus says to them, “*I am your servant.*” We do not have the foot washing in this account (only in John 13), but the same point is made. Remember Peter’s objection to having his feet washed. This is the act of humility, treating others as better or greater than yourself. The whole night is shaking the disciples to their core in confronting them with things they could not imagine. Jesus recognizes this and turns to give them a little comfort before the more troubling experiences continue.

**v28** *“You are those who have stood by me in my trials; <sup>29</sup> and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, <sup>30</sup> so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* At the end of John 6 many had left Jesus, but the 12 remained. It is easy for us to fall into pride and want recognition for ourselves. We need to keep in mind that it is not our mission. It is not our greatness or our personal achievement that matters, but what God makes of us, and the great name He bestows on all who love Him. It is God’s mission. Would that all Christians understood their calling within the priesthood of all believers.

**v31** *“Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, <sup>32</sup> but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”* We do not have Judas leaving in this account. Verse 21 had him at the table with them. The focus turns to Peter at this point without any mention of Peter doing something to gain that attention. In two of the gospels, Matthew and Mark, we find Jesus’ prediction that all the disciples would become deserters that very night. Peter

responds with his bold assertion that he would die with Jesus before deserting Him. It is that bold self-confidence that brings out the somber prediction.

**v33** *And he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!"* <sup>34</sup> *Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me."* In the wake of the prediction of betrayal, this is a much lesser offense, but it also has its cumulative effect, as it is during conversation that has drawn attention to the failure of all the disciples. It is hard to get past the word 'deny.' We know what Peter will do, but Jesus' words ahead of the event convey His concern and prayer to the Father on Peter's behalf. Peter's reaction is the expected bravado. As in the other gospels he proclaims his willingness to die, and here is the added note of willingness to go to prison. To this claim Jesus responds with the warning of denial. It is a good warning to all of us of our own weakness.

**v35** *He said to them, "When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "No, not a thing."* Jesus turns His attention back to the whole group. It is a moment for teaching and preparation. He reminds them of the mission experiences when He instructed them to take nothing. At the time they were bringing the word of God to Israelites in Galilee who were looking for a messiah. Having heard of Jesus they were filled with expectation. They were very open to the disciples coming in Jesus' name to tell them His message. He reminds them they went out with nothing and yet lacked nothing.

**v36** *He said to them, "But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one."* <sup>37</sup> *For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was counted among the lawless'; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled."* <sup>38</sup> *They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." He replied, "It is enough."* This message is different and sets a stark contrast to their previous work. After Jesus' crucifixion, many in the Jewish community will look upon Him as a failure and they will no longer find such a receptive audience. Instead, they will face persecution. Jesus has already warned them that they will all desert Him. Matthew quotes from the prophet Zechariah 13:7 to speak of this as fulfillment of prophecy. In this OT passage it is God who is directing the sword to strike. That is appropriate in that we have much in the gospels that make clear it is God who oversees all that is taking place, and that Jesus is not simply a passive victim. There are difficulties in understanding the connection of these OT passages. It is another reminder of the failure of the shepherds in Israel, and the way in which the people are caught up in the fate of the shepherd. It would seem the important connection in relation to Jesus is that the disciples who stand near to Jesus will suffer even as He has suffered. They now leave for the Mount of Olives.

We see the presence of Satan and temptation in the sinfulness of all of those around Jesus. Even as they fail in loyalty and support, Jesus continues to act toward them with compassion and concern. Human sin is evident in a manner that reminds us of our sinful nature and the reason we need a Savior. The disciples do not understand what is to take place and when the moment of crisis comes they will flee, abandoning Jesus. Jesus' human frailty will be evident in His prayers to the Father immediately preceding His arrest.

## **Year 3: Week 11– Chapter 22      *Holy Week – Gethsemane***

**v39** *He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him.* Luke only tells us they are at the Mount of Olives. John adds the detail of a garden but makes no mention of prayer at that location after the High Priestly prayer in chapter 17. Only Matthew and Mark give the name Gethsemane. The name ‘Gethsemane’ is based on a Semitic term for ‘olive press.’ The traditional understanding is that this prayer takes place within an olive grove most likely lower down the slope heading toward the Mount of Olives. While olive trees have a long life, it is notable that historians tell us every tree for miles around Jerusalem was cut down during the siege of Jerusalem (69-70 AD).

**v40** *When he reached the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.”* The disciples might have assumed they were on their way back to the place they have stayed each night they have been to Jerusalem. We do not know how long since Judas departed from the group, but it adds evidence to the idea that they had been sleeping every night in the garden. Judas is then able to lead the troops here after the meal, having been prevented from discovering the place of the meal ahead of time.

**v41** *Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed, After encouraging them to pray for relief from trial, Jesus travels further into the grove to pray by Himself.*

**v42** *“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.”* Matthew and Mark give lengthy, more involved accounts of this time of prayer. Mark notes Jesus’ troubled and sorrowful spirit even before He tells the three, *“I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.”* In Luke, after the expression of concern for the disciples’ wellbeing, we find Jesus alone, knelt in prayer. It reminds us of the reality of the temptation He endured earlier and the horror of the crucifixion. It affirms the revulsion of what He is about to endure. It also gives His obedience and willingness to do even this for His Father.

When we think of the unity of the Trinity, it is hard for us to distinguish between the will of the Father and that of the Son. Here it is on full display, with the will of the Son subservient to that of the Father. The words, *“Thy will be done,”* words are very familiar to us. We use them regularly in the Lord’s Prayer. When we say, them do we think about the way we acknowledge that our lives are in God’s hands? Are we truly willing for God to use us in the way He chooses? Jesus knows what lies ahead, and He understands that there is no other way, and yet here is the prayer. In these words from Jesus, we confront the very real temptation that faces Jesus, to look for another way. At the same time, while Jesus is tempted, He expresses His intention to fully comply with the desire of His Father.

Matthew and Mark give an account of Jesus praying three times. Here in Luke we are told the basic message of His prayer. Within those words are mentioned the cup. I mentioned the four cups at the Last Supper, with the debate over the judgment or redemption as the moment for the words of institution. Here the word cup is most pointedly directed at judgment, the cup of God’s wrath poured out on sin, which Jesus is about to endure as the substitute for the 1<sup>st</sup> Adam and his descendants.

**v43** *[[Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. <sup>44</sup> In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.]]* (These verses are found in several significant manuscripts and many of the writings of early church fathers, but they are not found in the best manuscript tradition. They are included in text of most translations following the tradition of the KJV.) No other gospel records this. The angel does not rescue Jesus. He receives from the angel what He had requested for Peter (v31-32). The depth of Jesus' anguish is not His own impeding death. It is the burden He carries, the anguish of His soul bearing the sin of the world.

**v45** *When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, <sup>46</sup> and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial."* After Jesus finishes this prayer, He returns to the disciples. Peter, who had been most vociferous in expressing his own courage in stamina in standing with Jesus, has already failed to pray as Jesus had instructed. Standing may be one thing but sitting or reclining at this time had brought almost instantaneous sleep. This prayer is a reminder for us. Even if God's will that must be done is suffering for us, Jesus sets an example of pleading and asking boldly for our deepest desires. We do not always receive what we want, even with the right motives. At heart, the most important thing is His submission to God's will that remains at the heart of His prayer. This scene in the divine drama has come to a close and the stage is set for the next. The quiet of the garden is broken as a large crowd arrives looking for Jesus, led by Judas the betrayer.

**v47** *While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; The text notes, "Judas, one of the twelve," and that phrase, "one of the twelve" is used numerous times in each of the gospels. It is almost always used of Judas, in relation to his betrayal, although John does use it in reference to Thomas when he is denying Jesus' resurrection. In other words, the use of the phrase might be seen as noting inclusion within this exclusive group, even as the action or reference would seem to place them outside that inner circle. For Judas in particular, it might be called a refrained expression of disdain. They do not call him wretched, vile, vulgar, repulsive or any other outwardly hostile terms, but remain subtle in their denunciation.*

**v48** *but Jesus said to him, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?"* The primary act of betrayal may lead us to wonder at that restraint, as Judas' means of betrayal seems particularly egregious. He has agreed beforehand that the signal to identify Jesus will be the one to whom Judas gives a kiss. In Proverbs 27:6 we read, *"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy."* Jesus directly addresses Judas. As the group approaches, especially in this place away from the crowds of the day, the disciples understand the moment. This is what Jesus has been talking about.

**v49** *When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" <sup>50</sup> Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. We remember earlier in the upper room that Jesus had mentioned the need for a sword. While others wait for guidance, one strikes out cutting off the ear of the slave of the High Priest. All four gospels tell us of this event, but only John gives us the names.*

## **Year 3: Week 12– Chapter 22**

## **Holy Week – Arrest and Trial**

**v51** *But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him.* Peter swings his sword and draws blood. Immediately Jesus intervenes. He does not want the disciples harmed and an armed defense does not suit His purpose. Beyond stopping the armed conflict, he heals the injury to Malchus’ ear. Earlier Jesus encouraged them to have a sword, but this is not the time to use it.

**v52** *Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? <sup>53</sup> When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!”* This is God’s plan. It is written in the scriptures. The OT prophesied that the Messiah must suffer and die. Jesus knew that the event of the cross must take place. He had just finished praying for some other way, but the words of the prophets must be fulfilled and God’s sovereign decree that this will come to pass means that it must come to pass. Jesus turns His attention to the crowds that have come out against him. In the temple they were afraid of the large crowds gathered for the festival. Here at night, in secret they can accomplish the goal apart from any potential or significant opposition. The religious leaders would now appear in control, with Jesus in custody, but His words highlight the cowardly nature of their actions. They would not act in the open in the Temple, and now they have come against Him with a huge, heavily armed crowd. He concludes with the truth about what they are doing. In the temptation Satan told Jesus all the kingdoms of the world were under his authority as a part of offering the shortcut to kingship. While it is only temporary, Satan does govern the ways of this world and in this moment the power of darkness is on full display. With Jesus making no effort to resist and literally giving Himself up to this mob, the disciples fled. Luke makes no mention of this. He turns his attention to Peter with the 1st of the denials at hand.

**v54** *Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest’s house. But Peter was following at a distance.* Jesus is under arrest and has been taken to the home of the High Priest. The assumption is that this is the home of Annas, but it is likely a large family compound including the homes of both Annas and Caiaphas. In the other gospels the first attention is given to the political intrigue and trials that Jesus endures. Here in Luke, we find another instance of the author giving priority to holding a theme together over that of chronological order. The previous verses have given primary focus to the reactions of the disciples to the events. Luke brings conclusion to Peter’s activity during the night, before turning complete attention to the trials and crucifixion.

**v55** *When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. <sup>56</sup> Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, “This man also was with him.” <sup>57</sup> But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.”* Given Peter’s action in the garden of attacking Malchus, we can imagine that some in the crowd would pay more attention to Peter than the rest of the disciples. His attempt to enter the courtyard, even with the cover of darkness is exceptionally risky. In John’s gospel, John presents himself as going into the courtyard and gaining entrance because the High Priest knows him. He then goes back, to let Peter in past the servant girl watching the

gate. Mark mentions him moving after making this denial, wary of their suspicions, and looking for another place where he could try to remain inconspicuous.

**v58** *A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!"* Even if Peter did move to another area, it did not help him. Someone else notes Peter's presence with Jesus. The suspicion is shared again, but Peter is quick to make a denial. Mark also includes Peter adding an oath, so that he is not only telling a lie, but swearing to the truth of his lie! While his insistence may have prompted them to back off for a while, they are continuing to eye him with suspicion. While his insistence may have prompted them to back off for a while, they are continuing to eye him.

**v59** *Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean."* <sup>60</sup> *But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!"* *At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed.* After another hour or more, another man challenges him. Matthew accounts this recognition to his Galilean accent.

**v61** *The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times."* <sup>62</sup> *And he went out and wept bitterly.* Guilt overwhelms Peter and he leaves to weep bitterly. How do we compare Peter and Judas? Can we relate to Peter's experience? Christian faith calls us to be bold in our witness. Peter is a part of the resurrection story, but it is in John's gospel that we get a clear picture of reconciliation and forgiveness along the lakeshore as Jesus asks him three times, "Peter, do you love me?"

**v63** *Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; <sup>64</sup>they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?"* <sup>65</sup> *They kept heaping many other insults on him.* Attention turns to Jesus' suffering. History has significantly colored the reading of this text. When we come into the trial, there are many breaches of Jewish law. There are so many that scholars attribute the account to later Jewish Christian hostility, in which the writers desired to make the Jews look as bad as possible. In the history of the church, persecution of the Jews was often justified by using these accounts as proof of their despicable character. God's Word tells us that everyone was guilty, every Jew and Gentile who has sinned against God.

**v66** *When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. <sup>67</sup>They said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us." He replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe; <sup>68</sup>and if I question you, you will not answer. <sup>69</sup>But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God."* <sup>70</sup> *All of them asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" He said to them, "You say that I am."* <sup>71</sup> *Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"* Expediency is at the heart of all the breaches of the Jewish and Roman laws. They want testimony that would legitimate a death sentence and are more than happy with false testimony. Luke only gives the charge that will justify their hatred. The chief accusation of blasphemy, does not accomplish their purpose before the Romans, but a similar charge, He claims to be King, can be presented as an attack on Roman authority. As we look at this it is important to see that the prophets have foretold these things. Jesus has told both the disciples and the crowd that arrested Him, "It is necessary for these things to happen as foretold by the prophets."



## Year 3: Week 13– Chapter 23

## Holy Week – Jesus Brought to Pilate

**v1** *Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate.* In reading this lesson, I am looking at the other gospels also, for clues and insights into all that is going on. The chapter begins with the assembly gathered at the home of the High Priest Caiaphas, making the next move in bringing Jesus to Pilate.

**v2** *They began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.”*

<sup>3</sup>*Then Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” He answered, “You say so.”* In the hearing before Caiaphas, the question for Jesus was, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?” This is not a question that would have any concern for Pilate. It does not come into conflict with Roman law. Instead, Pilate asks Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews?” This matters because it can easily be understood as a challenge to Caesar’s authority, and a desire for independent political rule in Israel. Jesus responds, “You say so,” similar to his response to the Chief Priests, “You have said so.” Commentators have differing opinions on the clear meaning of Jesus’ words. Some suggest His meaning is, “Your words not mine.” In the NIV it is translated as, “Yes, it is as you say.” This would seem to be an important point, since it might set Pilate against Jesus.

**v4** *Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no basis for an accusation against this man.”* <sup>5</sup>*But they were insistent and said, “He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place.”* In Luke’s account those few words are all that Jesus says. In John’s gospel we have a more complete account of this exchange (John 18:36-37). Jesus does acknowledge being the King of the Jews, but He includes more. Beyond that answer, we find that the chief priests and elders making further accusations against Jesus. While we do not have the specifics of the charges they make, most assume they are in line with the charges made during the night, with highlight on the things that would concern the Romans. The charge of destroying the Temple and rebuilding it might be included, because such an act against this holiest site in Israel would seem certain to bring riots and other unrest that would disrupt the Roman control and authority.

**v6** *When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.* Pilate was governor of Judea from about 26-36AD and the Jewish historian Josephus records a few examples of his troubled administration. There are several accounts of ways he offended Jewish religious sensibilities, and just a few years after Jesus’ crucifixion he is recalled to Rome after the violent suppression of a Samaritan group at Mount Gerizim. Of primary interest is that these troubles in his administration and numerous complaints to Rome about his rule left him wary of these Jewish leaders, their actions and motives. He does not want anything to do with this. Luke tells us the Pilate’s reaction after they mentioned Galilee.

**v7** *And when he learned that he was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time.* <sup>8</sup>*When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign.* Herod knew about Jesus and was glad to see Him. His first reaction at hearing of Jesus was the distress of guilt over John, thinking Jesus was

John the Baptist raised from the dead. There is plenty written of Herod's evil deeds, and Jesus was careful to avoid Tiberius, Herod's home during His ministry. Herod wanted to see one of His miracles.

**v9** *He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup> The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him.* Herod questioned Jesus at length as the chief priests and scribes stood by continuing their condemnation. In the end Jesus would say nothing.

**v11** *Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate.* This is the first mention of the Roman soldiers mocking and abusing Him, and including the elegant robe. Herod receives no satisfaction in this interrogation turning instead to treat Jesus as a joke. He puts the royal robes on Him as an imitation king, as a court jester, an amusing curiosity. From this attitude he clearly has no fear of Jesus and nothing worthy of condemning Him so he returns Jesus to Pilate.

**v12** *That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.* Luke concludes this scene with an interesting side note, that Herod and Pilate became fast friends after this, a significant turn from the hostility that existed before.

**v13** *Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, <sup>14</sup> and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. <sup>15</sup> Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. <sup>16</sup> I will therefore punish and release him."* In reading and studying in the history we have of Pilate's term as governor in Judea, and the number of occasions in which he ran into conflict with Jewish passions. His desire to avoid more trouble is understandable, especially given the obvious internal Jewish theological controversy. Pilate then comes up with another idea. Later in the day there would be the expected release of a prisoner at the request of the crowds. Luke does not give a complete explanation of this practice. The other three gospels tell us, *"Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted."* Matthew also tells us that Pilate recognizes the jealousy of the chief priests and with the crowd beginning to grow as the sun rises and the day grows warmer he might have hoped for more support for Jesus. Pilate would have heard of Jesus, especially given the events of Palm Sunday and has hopes his popularity will overrule the schemes of the chief priests. He wants to pacify the crowd and so he proposes a punishment for the things they have alleged even though there is no evidence. After that, he says he will release Jesus. This brings no satisfaction. They were beating and punishing Jesus on their own before bringing Him to Pilate. The only reason they are there is to accomplish His death. Matthew adds another side note at this point. As Pilate makes this presentation, his wife interrupts him. She sends word and he turns his attention to her message. Several commentators have noted this interruption may have provided time for the chief priests and elders to get to work. They turn to their aides for help and begin working the crowd. On Pilate's return the sentiment of the crowd has been conditioned.

## **Year 3: Week 14– Chapter 23      *Trial before Pilate***

**v18** *But they all cried out together, “Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas”—<sup>19</sup> a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder.* It is at this point we hear the crowd. This response is understandable given the context provided in the other gospels. Luke does provide some background on Barabbas.

Does anyone there understand the choice? How many even knew that Jesus was under arrest? The leaders were not going to spread the word because they wanted to do as much as possible in secret. John tells us that they had brought Jesus to the governor’s headquarters early in the morning. It is most like just after sunrise and perhaps as early as 6am. As the city awakes with activity, how many can know all that has taken place overnight? Could they even hear Pilate when he makes the request, or is word passed by the Jewish rulers that everyone is to request Barabbas?

**v20** *Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, <sup>21</sup> but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!”* Interruption or not, the religious leaders who brought their crowd of followers along lead the crowds and they take advantage of the opportunity. The response comes and Pilate’s next attempt to get rid of the problem is foiled.

**v22** *A third time he said to them, “Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.”* Pilate is left with the question that started his day. In the end it is simple expediency that rules the day. The interest of justice does not matter when the demands and threats of the crowd are aroused. As we observe justice in our own society right now, one must ask if things have changed. Expediency can rule the day as much in our time as it did 2000 years ago.

**v23** *But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. <sup>24</sup> So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted.* That said, we think again about the choices Pilate faced. He knows the truth, but seems compelled to act against what he knows is just. In Matthew there is another step. He washes his hands before the crowd. It is an action with Jewish precedent. In Deuteronomy 9, the Torah places responsibility on a city for bloodshed that happens in its vicinity. In Genesis 9 God said, *“Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person’s blood be shed, for in his own image God made humankind.”* This is God’s justice; murder requires the death penalty. For the Israelites, God demands that the community seek out murders in order that justice be fulfilled. If they make an effort to do this, but are not able to find the murder, after a time they may offer a sacrifice and declare the innocence of their community. (Deuteronomy 9:6-7)

**v25** *He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.* Pilate is the ruling authority in Jerusalem: the Roman governor over the Jewish people. They hate this foreign rule, everything that Pilate represents, and hope for a savior who will deliver them from their enemies. But in this moment they are standing before him screaming and putting every form of pressure they can imagine upon Pilate in order to force him to kill the very Messiah that God has sent them. There is no reason, no justice, only the evil passion and desire of a sinful world. It is for sinners such as these that Jesus has come to die.

**v26** *As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.* The other gospels include the description of Jesus suffering prior to the journey to the cross. He was scourged and stripped, receiving the crown of thorns on his head and every kind of ridicule imaginable. However strong Jesus may have been, with all the events of holy week, He has now been awake through the night and received the physical torture which was often nearly enough to kill a man by itself. There can be little strength left. It was Roman custom for the one being crucified to carry the cross to the place of execution. Many depictions show Jesus with just the crossbar, but there is nothing to tell us that it was not the whole cross, other than trying to imagine how a man in that condition could have carried something that heavy. The physical reality explains the impressment of Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross. It is still early in the day and Simon was coming into the city along with throngs of other Jewish faithful to celebrate the Passover in the city. The description of Simon and his family in Mark's account suggest that Simon was well known in the early church and his sons provided a living link with the events, for those first reading the gospels.

**v27** *A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him.* <sup>28</sup> *But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.* <sup>29</sup> *For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.'* <sup>30</sup> *Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.'* <sup>31</sup> *For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"* As they journey the Via Dolorosa, the way of the cross, there are women along the path who are wailing; expressing their grief at what is happening to this one they may have thought to be the Messiah. Even in His weakness and suffering, Jesus turns to them and says, *"Do not weep for me."* We are reminded of Jesus weeping as He came to the city with the lament of all the blessings showered upon the chosen people even as they have routinely rejected the Lord their God. He tells them not to weep for Him, because He is about to fulfill the purpose for which He came to earth. Rather, they should weep for all those who will suffer the judgment and destruction of Jerusalem in the coming generation, all those who continue to reject the work of the Messiah.

**v32** *Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.* <sup>33</sup> *When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.* At the place called The Skull, they crucified Him. I have been to Jerusalem and stood north of the city wall and one of the gates, looking over the bus terminal, at the rock formation that looks like a skull with holes for the eyes and nose. While troops might not want to climb up there, it fits to Romans impulse for all to see. Luke notes that there were two others crucified.

**v34** *[[Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.]]* *And they cast lots to divide his clothing.* As He is lifted up on the cross, Luke gives us His words. These words speak of the primary purpose of this event, the suffering and death are to pay the penalty for sin so that those who believe in Jesus may have exactly what Jesus says, the forgiveness of their sins. Some authorities lack these words.

## **Year 3: Week 15– Chapter 23      Crucifixion**

**v35** *And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!”* As we read these words of scoffing, it is good to remember the words of Satan in the temptation, *“If you are.”*

**v36** *The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine,<sup>37</sup> and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!”* The soldiers join in and they offered him wine mixed with gall. Commentators suggest that while this would have the numbing affect of a drug, they likely gave it to calm down the victim in order to make their work easier as they pounded in the nails. It was not done for the sake of the victim, but the executioners. The taste would be awful and Jesus tastes it but according to Matthew 17:34, He does not drink any. He is stripped bare and once the cross is lifted up the soldiers can look at dividing up any spoils that remain. In this case it is Jesus’ robe.

**v38** *There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”* Pilate was also in a mood of mockery. His target was not Jesus, but the religious leaders who had compelled his consent to this travesty of justice as a matter of expediency. Following normal Roman custom there was a sign placed over the head of the victim stating the crime for which he was executed. Over Jesus’ head on the cross it read, *“This is the King of the Jews.”* According to John, it also named Him as *“Jesus of Nazareth,”* a man from nowhere. Was that a crime? It was Pilate mocking the Jewish leaders even as it proclaimed the truth of Jesus’ identity. This is the chosen One of God in the act of saving the world

**v39** *One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”* There are further insults even from one of the criminals hanging next to Jesus. It is the same reference to saving others. *“Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!”* The irony is that in dying on the cross He is in the midst of the greatest miracle in all creation, His death is the means for saving all those who repent of their sins. He is not saving Himself because His death is salvation for the whole world. Other gospels, (Matthew 17:44) include the mockery of these criminals. Only Luke includes one with a change of heart.

**v40** *But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?”<sup>41</sup> And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.”<sup>42</sup> Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”<sup>43</sup> He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”* In this moment, the other criminal sees the truth. When he turns to Jesus and asks, “Jesus, remember me,” there is forgiveness and salvation as Jesus responds to his need. The cross accomplishes its purpose. The other gospels provide other attacks. Matthew includes the words of destroying and rebuilding the temple in three days. Right before their eyes, the temple of His Body is in the process of being destroyed and its will soon be rebuilt.

The gospels do not give a theological description of the significance of each word and action that takes place in Jesus’ death on the cross. Instead they give a brief description of the events telling us, *“This is what happened.”* As we hear the story, we are left to consider what other sections of scripture tell us about the significance of these things. Why is this

one crucifixion so significant, given the tens of thousands of other people who have died on a cross? To the world it looks no different than so many others, no different than the two that died on either side of Jesus. It is Paul, primarily in the NT, who brings us the meaning and an understanding of these events, using the OT history.

**v44** *It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, <sup>45</sup> while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two.* Mark 15:25 tells us, *"It was the third hour when they crucified him."* That would be at 9AM. There is darkness covering the whole land for three hours, from noon until 3PM. In John 8:12 Jesus says, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* There are numerous OT prophecies connected to light. In Isaiah 9:2 we read, *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them light shone."* We need to recognize God's sovereign control over this whole affair. It is no accident that in the midst of Jesus becoming sin, while suffering the wrath of God, darkness should cover the earth. As death arrives, the curtain in the Temple is torn in two. Jesus Himself has become the One mediator between God and man and by His atoning sacrifice that forgives sin, makes those who believe worthy to come into the presence of God.

**v46** *Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."* Having said this, he breathed his last. At the end Jesus cries out again. We listen throughout scripture as the Bible describes to us the reality of God who is One God, yet exists in three persons. We speak of the three persons as existing in community, or communion, the mutual indwelling and interaction of the three persons. Jesus' cry of despair from Psalm 22 is found in Matthew and Mark. In order for Jesus to pay the penalty for sin on our behalf He must suffer the justice and wrath of God that includes God's abandonment of sinners. That cry is Jesus suffering the wrath and separation. This idea is reinforced when we consider the goal of Christian life that has at times been described as life lived *Coram Deo*. *Coram Deo* means, *'before the face of God'* and the full reformation understanding is, *'before the face of God, under the authority of God, to the honor and glory of God.'* It is because Jesus suffers this separation to pay the penalty for our sin, and because He has given us His righteousness, that we are cleansed and purified, sanctified and made worthy to enter once again into the very presence of God. John gives us, *"It is finished,"* as Jesus' final words, signaling the accomplishment of God's purpose in the cross. Here in Luke the final words signal accomplishment with words that assert Jesus' trust in His Father at the moment of death. *"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"* In His moment of death He is declaring His victory and accomplishing the purpose for which He had come.

**v47** *When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent."* This reaction of the centurion is recorded in all three synoptic gospels. Even as the criminal had his heart changed in seeing Jesus on the cross, we end with the reaction of the Roman soldiers. When they saw all that had taken place, we are told that the centurion on duty praised God and proclaimed His innocence. These Romans had no part in the conflict between Jesus and the Chief Priests, and were simply carrying out orders. They recognized the truth before their eyes.

## **Year 3: Week 16– Chapter 23      *Burial***

**v48** *And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. <sup>49</sup> But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.*

In Mark we read that among them were, “*Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.*” The text reveals that there were many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee. We do not know of any disciples watching Jesus’ death other than John, whose exchange with Jesus leaves him with the responsibility for watching over Jesus’ mother. We know that there were a number of women in close proximity to Jesus and the disciples during their travels taking care of provisions. From the different Gospels, we learn different facts about this time between Jesus’ death and His burial. In John, the Jewish leaders ask Pilate to break the legs of those on the cross, so their death would be swift and their bodies removed before the end of the day, by 6pm. The desire to remove the bodies, especially since it was the time of the festival, comes from Deuteronomy 21:22-23. John’s account also gives us the surprise that Jesus is already dead as confirmed by piercing his side with a spear (Zechariah 12:10). The fact that Jesus’ bones are not broken and the removal of the bodies are connected to a number of OT passages. It is important in connecting Jesus’ death on the cross with the Passover Lamb. In Exodus 12:46, as Moses describes the statute of Passover we read, “*You shall not break any of its bones.*” It is suggested that for all trauma to Jesus’ body, there were no bones broken because He did not resist, but gave His life as a willing sacrifice for the sake of those He came to save. The account in John 19:33-34 is significant for a couple of reasons. First, there have been many skeptics in history who have argued the “swoon” theory, that Jesus was not really dead and revived after His body was placed in the tomb. Others familiar with Roman crucifixion report that the Romans knew how to kill people and that crucifixion never failed. The guard left in charge would face severe sanctions for failure, thus, even as they find Jesus dead, one of them pierced the side because they will not take any chances. They know how to make sure someone is dead.

**v50** *Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, <sup>51</sup> had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. <sup>52</sup> This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. All four gospels tell of Joseph of Arimathea going to Pilate to ask for the body. Luke includes the wonder of Pilate that Jesus would be already dead. Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin, but did not agree to the plan and action of the other leaders. It is likely that Joseph comes to Pilate shortly after the other religious leaders have been there and before anyone else can report about Jesus’ death. With Jesus’ death confirmed, Joseph of Arimathea gains permission from Pilate. In John 19:38 we read, “*Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body.*” John also mentions Nicodemus, another ruler of the Jews as helping with the burial. Their efforts in this moment exposed their devotion to Jesus, which in Nicodemus’ case must have grown since his initial encounter in John 3.*

**v53** *Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid.* Jesus' burial was far from customary. The bodies of most of those killed by crucifixion would be disposed of with little care. This is noteworthy also because Isaiah 53:9 says, "*They made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death.*" He died between two thieves, but now that, "*It is finished,*" the beginning of the exaltation comes in the form of burial, a new tomb, not previously used, such that it would be worthy of royalty. Joseph has a difficult task in burial, first lowering the cross and then removing the nails to release his body. Would any of the Roman soldiers have given assistance? He died naked, so they wrap his body in a cloth and bring it to the tomb for burial. The tradition site for Jesus' burial is considered to be within what is now the Church of the Holy Sepulcher located within the walls of the city. I mentioned the possible connection of Golgotha with a rock formation above the bus depot just outside a north gate of the walled city. Just west of there is a place called "*The Garden Tomb.*" I visited there on my trip to Jerusalem to see and step into the tomb, which does feature a large round stone outside set in a track for it to be moved in front of the entrance. While there is no way to know if this is the place, its location, within a block or so of the bus depot, strikes me as probable given the constraints of that moment. With the day quickly ending, and the need to bury him before 6pm, this location would have served well in the effort to accomplish the goal. This all resonates for me with what we read in John 19:41-42.

The linen cloth also provides much discussion in our time. Many are familiar with The Shroud of Turin. Historians can chronicle its history from 1354. Carbon dating and other scientific studies give evidence that it dates from that time. Others note that no one yet understands how to reproduce the image, even with modern technology not available when it first appeared. The debate on its authenticity continues, but it gives an image many believe to be that of Jesus.

**v54** *It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning.* <sup>55</sup> *The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid.* <sup>56</sup> *Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.*

*On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.* Jesus' body is placed in the tomb, wrapped in the cloth, but with no other preparations. The women watch these events, and as we know are anxious to come and prepare the body as soon as the Sabbath ends. But the day of rest is about to begin, and they must go to the place they are staying and wait through the Sabbath until they can return. The women witnessed these things, but where were Peter and the other 9 disciples? John was there and Judas was gone. They were overwhelmed by this reality that they could not comprehend, even though Jesus warned them of these events time after time.



## **Year 3: Week 17– Chapter 24      *Resurrection***

He is risen! Alleluia! He is risen indeed! This is the Easter message. It is the good news and the power of God that accomplishes His purpose. It begins when the Sabbath has ended. This in itself proclaims the realization of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant ended the week of work with a day of rest and the New Covenant comes with the dawn of the day, the new week, and the beginning of a new way of life for those who are in Christ Jesus, united with Him in His death and His glorious resurrection.

**v1** *But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.* It was at the beginning of this new day that the women went to see the tomb. They were coming with spices in order to do the normal rituals of burial that could not be done when Jesus' body was placed in the tomb at the approach of Sabbath. We are reminded that they were the last ones present watching as the stone was rolled in front of it.

**v2** *They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they went in, they did not find the body.* There is no reason to think they had any idea of the presence of a Roman guard or a seal on the grave as Mark tells us, *"They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"* We do not know the proximity of the soldiers to the women when this happens, but in Matthew we are told there was an earthquake and the soldiers shook for fear of him and became like dead men. They fainted or are somehow made unconscious in this moment and in no way impede the women in any of their movement. All their concerns disappeared when they arrived, because the stone was already rolled back. Now there is a new concern. Where is the body? The angel talks to the women and announces to them that Jesus is alive.

**v4** *While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. <sup>5</sup> The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.* Among critics of the Gospel accounts, the discrepancies are a prime target. Mark's account is very similar, but only mentions 1 young man in a white robe. It only takes one to say the words and it doesn't mean there was not another present. In either case they were frightened. But he knew the concern and told them what they needed to know. In Mark, he points them into the grave to see the place where Jesus' body had been laid. This is one of many examples in the gospels where the first generation believers were invited to consider the evidence, what they had seen and heard for themselves. Luke and John both note that the linen cloths in which Jesus' body had been wrapped were still laying there, an indication to many that his body had not been stolen. The other obvious question at this point is, who would have taken the body?

**v6** *Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup> that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again."* We remember the 3 passion predictions during the journey to Jerusalem. The events of that week and the grand finale on Sunday morning were all a part of the plan. For hundreds and even thousands of years God had been telling His people from one generation to another what He was going to do. In Isaiah 42:9 God says to His people, *"Behold the former things have*

*come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.”* Jesus did not need the stone to be moved in order to rise or come out of the tomb. That night when He appears to the disciples in the upper room we are told that He appeared among them even as the doors were locked. The stone is removed for others to know that He is no longer there.

**v8** *Then they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup> and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.* As the women remember Jesus’ words, they return to the disciples to tell them what had happened. There is much speculation over how the women became the first witnesses to the resurrection. The most obvious answer is because they were there. They were the ones who got up early in the morning to go to the tomb, once the Sabbath was over. They were coming to do the burial work and anointing of the body. The lesson we might learn from this is that God rewards the faithful, such that the closer you stay to the Lord and what He is doing, the more you will enjoy the experience of His mighty works. The disciples were not there to witness the burial or the resurrection. The indication from all of the gospels is that they remain secluded in the upper room in fear for their lives. Many modern commentators make much of the fact that the women are the first witnesses. There is the practical reason of their being there. Given Jesus’ appearance in the upper room that night, we know that Jesus could have made Himself known first to the disciples. A few years ago I read a top ten list of reasons to believe in the resurrection, and the first of those was this matter of the women. The main point was that in the culture of that time, especially among the Jews, no one would have made up the story in this manner trying to convince people of this truth. In Jewish courts of the time, women were not allowed to be witnesses as they were considered to be unreliable, yet all the gospels agree and begin with the account of the women.

**v10** *Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. <sup>11</sup> But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup> But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.* The women go to the disciples with the message. They are the first witnesses passing on the message of the angels. He is not here! He is not in the tomb because He has been raised from the dead. The message that the women have to bring to the disciples is the one that the chief priests and Pharisees feared. They feared it would come from this group stealing the body and making the claim. In this account their only connection with the event comes in the message from the women informing them of this new development. The disciples are shocked and disbelieving at the news. It seemed to them as an idle tale. Peter runs to the tomb to see for himself. At the empty tomb, he is amazed. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul provides the clear theological reasoning that places Easter at the center of our faith. This is the most important event in all of human history. It is the centerpiece of our faith and the basis for believing there is life after death, the life that God has promised us through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

## **Year 3: Week 18– Chapter 24      *Road to Emmaus***

**v13** *Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup>and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.* The other gospels tell stories directly connected to either the disciples or the women reporting that there was much confusion among the group as they heard the reports of the empty tomb. It sounded to all of them like ‘*an idle tale.*’ Here in Luke we get a unique account describing Jesus’ encounter with these two Passover pilgrims on the journey home to the town of Emmaus.

**v15** *While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup>but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.* This story is one of many that hint at Jesus making a number of resurrection appearances on that first Easter. We know Jesus appeared to Peter and His brother James even though we do not have the account of those interactions. The inability to recognize Jesus is a feature in several resurrection appearances leaving us to wonder if it is simply kept from them or there is some other reason. Those who saw Him on the cross would have witnessed disfigurement of some sort from the flogging, beatings and crown of thorn. Later we know Jesus shows them the wound in His hands and feet, but much has change since He was on the cross.

**v17** *And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad.* They know the story; the events that have taken place but have no comprehension of the meaning behind it. The details of these events will become important to the telling of the story in the years to come, but at this point they are still in grief, feeling the finality of death.

**v18** *Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?”* This leads us to understand the public nature of Jesus’ crucifixion. They could not comprehend that someone could have been in Jerusalem and not known what had happened. It would be like someone walking out of New York City on September 12, 2001 without any knowledge of the planes flying into the twin towers. The irony is that Jesus is actually the only one in Jerusalem who does know the things that have taken place.

**v19** *He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.”* When the Day of Pentecost arrived, Peter in that 1<sup>st</sup> sermon dwells on the details of those events. In Acts 2: 22 Peter begins, “*Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders...*”

**v20** *and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup>But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. <sup>22</sup>Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup>and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. <sup>24</sup>Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.”* The crowds who were in Jerusalem during the Passover had witnessed these events first hand. They knew what had

happened. Where was the Body? Was there a Roman guard to protect the tomb? Could these fishermen from Galilee have stolen the body from under the watchful eyes of a Roman cohort? These actual events mattered. As we listen again the Easter story, it is important to hear and to know that the things that took place were not just the chance course of history, but the definite plan of God for salvation acted out in history from the time of Adam and Eve into our own lives. The early church was faithful to this understanding. We could divide this text into 2-parts to emphasize two different aspects of the story. The first was the account of Cleopas and his friend as they made the journey home. They responded to Jesus by giving their eyewitness account of the things that had happened to Jesus in Jerusalem during the previous week. The second part is Jesus telling all the things about Himself written in the scriptures, that is the OT.

**v25** *Then Jesus said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!"* <sup>26</sup> *Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"* <sup>27</sup> *Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.* They knew the scriptures as faithful Jews and followers of Jesus, but as with everyone else encountered in the NT, they lacked a proper understanding of the overall theme of God's Word. It is God's story and a description of the working out of salvation across the ages of history. How long does it take to walk 7 miles? How much of the OT scriptures can one explain in that amount of time? The limits of time lead me to wonder which things in the OT Jesus discussed. The miraculous nature of the day and the event of resurrection have brought me to consider whether I need to be more open about my conception of the time available. Einstein's theory of relativity has opened to us to truth that time is not constant. The closer one comes to traveling at the speed of light the slower time moves. That has left me with the thought, how fast does time travel when you are walking with the one who is the light of the world. In other words, Jesus has all the time in the world to tell them everything He wants. The real constraint is the amount these two disciples can comprehend and contain within their finite minds. Even before the covenants we have the first gospel in God's curse of the serpent. It says of the seed of the woman that is Jesus, *"he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."* While we might cover many stories such as Noah that are part of God's overall plan, it makes sense that this expository lesson would be focused on those things most directly connect to Jesus. The call of Abraham and covenant includes the promise that, *'in you and in your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed.'* While that promise provides a rather vague reference to the means of salvation, it is in Jesus and in His death and resurrection that this blessing finds its fulfillment. Isaac satisfies the promise of a son, but then God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son, with emphasis given to *"Your only son whom you love."* It is a powerful preview of the sacrifice of God's only Son. We look at other stories such as Joseph and his brothers that vividly present the evil actions that God turns in to the means of saving those who did the wrong. The Joseph story leaves the Israelites in Egypt, where the Passover, the setting for Jesus' crucifixion gives visible shape to the comprehensive redemption narrative. Each element in the physical story of Israel's salvation from bondage in Egypt gives substance to the spiritual freedom from bondage to sin.

## Year 3: Week 19– Chapter 24

## Road to Emmaus - Continued

As the story continues across time with further promises to David, to Jeremiah and others, the progressive revelation of God's saving activity becomes clearer as each piece of the puzzle is put in place. It is this full narrative, the OT narrative, that the early Christian church used to proclaim Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises. When Paul is converted and becomes the leading missionary of the early church and the one to give primary shape to the Christian message he does so through his knowledge of the scriptures. Every argument he makes for justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ is rooted in these OT stories.

On the road to Emmaus Jesus begins this missionary work and gives the authority for using the Hebrew Scriptures in this way. Luke will present many examples of this in the book of *The Acts of the Apostles*. One of the more vivid early examples will come when Philip tells the Ethiopian Eunuch the 4<sup>th</sup> servant song found in Isaiah 52 and 53 is about Jesus and His death and resurrection. At the beginning of His lesson Jesus tells Cleopas and his friend, *"Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!"* Those words still speak the truth to us today. Those who study the scriptures struggle to understand them, even with the knowledge of Jesus' death and resurrection. It is a story that is hard to believe and is found to be offensive by many. Paul had to say repeatedly, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation."*

**v28** *As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.* <sup>29</sup> *But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them.* Jesus keeps walking as if going on to the next town, but Cleopas and his friend urged Him to stay with them. Jesus was explaining everything and it was coming across to them as if trying to remember a name you know well that just won't come to your mind. While the story started with shock that this man could be coming from Jerusalem without knowing the things about Jesus, by the end they were longing for His teaching and explanation to continue. They not only invite, they strongly urge Jesus to stay. They may have invited Him in as the normal act of hospitality in that culture where there were no regular hotels and inns for travelers. He was not asking for anything, rather implying that He had further to go. It was customary for Jews in that time to cease their travels at dusk. It strikes me that they wanted to hear more, to extend the conversation and the lesson on scripture as long as they could. He accepts the invitation.

**v30** *When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.* <sup>31</sup> *Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.* <sup>32</sup> *They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"* At the beginning of this story we were told that when they saw Jesus their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. Through the conversation they are coming to learn that the Bible had provided the road map for following and understanding Jesus' ministry and message. At first glance this may have extended the conversation a long time, but events could not have been prolonged too

long as, by the end of the story they are already back in Jerusalem that same evening. As soon as the food is prepared they sit down to partake. As they recline at the table Jesus took charge of the moment acting not as a guest, but as the host of the meal. It is in this moment of intimacy, sitting together in friendship at the table that the extraordinary takes place. Though the guest in the home, He takes charge, becomes the host to break and blessing the bread they are about to eat. It is reminiscent of Jesus doing the same when He fed the crowds of 5000 or 4000. For many this brings to mind the Lord's Supper, though it is necessary to say this is not what was happening in that moment. It is right to say that what happens is related to our experience of receiving the visible word of God in Holy Communion, knowing in the hearing and partaking that we are receiving exactly what God has promised. That final moment of epiphany, where it hit home with complete clarity was still evading them. After Jesus is gone they will recount, "*Were not our hearts burning within us?*" In that moment of revelation the encounter comes to an abrupt end. Cleopas and his friend begin to reflect on their feelings and reactions throughout this time with Jesus.

**v33** *That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.* <sup>34</sup> *They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!"* <sup>35</sup> *Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.* Commentators suggest that the use of the name Cleopas is significant evidence that he is Luke's source for this resurrection account. It is not just a personal account; it is one that could be confirmed by the disciples when they remember the presence of these two in the upper room later that evening. The warming of the hearts and the excitement of the full realization of this experience overcomes all the weariness and depression of the day. Luke tells us they rise that very hour and travel back to Jerusalem to share the good news. "*They found the eleven and their companions gathered together,*" a description that notes the larger company of followers including the women who were never far from the chosen 12. As they come to share the story, they are greeted with more excitement as by this time Jesus has appeared to others. The priority is given to Peter, the one who had denied Jesus, and yet retains his position of prominence within the group.

**v36** *While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."* <sup>37</sup> *They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.* The Road to Emmaus story now leads into the third resurrection appearance of Jesus. It is on Sunday night and corresponds with John's account of the same appearance. Jesus' opening words are, "*Peace be with you,*" a phrase that He uses numerous times with the disciples when calming the fears of one sort or another. Even though Peter and the women, along with the two from Emmaus have seen Jesus, His appearance at this moment fills them with fear once more. There is much speculation about the nature of Jesus' resurrected body. Our confession of faith, "we believe in 'the resurrection of the body,'" conveys our belief in the continuity between our earthly body and the resurrected body. Jesus' body is the same one that died on the cross, but in its resurrected form we understand that it has been transformed such that it is not possible for Him to die again. This is the eternal body of Jesus that still contains the scars of the crucifixion.