

Matthew Chapter 26 third Continued

Verses 47-50: The arrest took place in the garden of Gethsemane during the middle of the night as a mixed mob arrived to take Jesus. There can be little doubt that Jesus saw them approaching as there is always a full moon at Passover, and they probably carried lighted torches as well.

The Roman soldiers carried "swords" and the Jewish temple police had "staves" (clubs). The "sign" was necessary to identify Jesus to the Romans to whom He was unknown. Judas "kissed him" as the sign of betrayal of the One he still glibly called "master" (7:21-23).

Matthew 26:47 "And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people."

"Judas, one of the twelve" (see verse 14). All 4 evangelists refer to Judas this way (Mark 14:10, 43; Luke 22:47; John 6:71). Only once (John 20:24), is another disciple so described. The gospel writers seem to use the expression to underscore the insidiousness of Judas' crime, especially here, in the midst of the betrayal and he is a traitor, and one of the vilest too that ever disgraced human nature.

"A great multitude with swords and staves": They did not come as officers of justice, but as a desperate mob. Justice had nothing to do in this business. He who a little before had been one of the leaders of the flock of Christ has now become the leader of ruffians and murderers! What a terrible fall

Acts 1:16 "and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus"

In this lesson, we saw Jesus praying to the Father and then going to the entrance of the garden of Gethsemane to be there when Judas came. From these that came and the weapons that they brought, you would think that they had come out for a criminal. Isn't it a shame that the religious (chief priest and scribes), were involved in this?

Matthew 26:48 "Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast."

"Gave them a sign": That is, told them of a way by which they might know whom to apprehend, to wit, by his kissing him.

It was night. Jesus was besides, probably personally unknown to the "Romans", perhaps to the others also. Judas therefore, being well acquainted with him, to prevent the possibility of mistake, agreed to designate him by one of the tokens of friendship.

In this part of the world, it was not unusual to greet someone that you had great respect for with a kiss. Whether Judas did this as a cover up to the other disciples of what treacherous thing he had planned or not, we do not know.

This kiss was the kiss of death. It was dark, and they might not recognize Him at night. At any rate, even if these who came to get Jesus had never seen Him before, Judas would point Him out to them by kissing Him.

Matthew 26:49 "And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him."

“Hail, Master”: The word translated "hail," here, means to "rejoice," to have joy, and also to have "cause" of joy.

It thus expresses the "joy" which one friend has when he meets another, especially after an absence. It was used by the Jews and Greeks as a mode of salutation among friends. It would here seem to express the "joy" of Judas at finding his Master and again being "with him."

Master, In the original, means "Rabbi”.

“Kissed him). Gave him the common salutation of friends when meeting after absence. This mode of salutation was more common among Eastern nations than with us

He had the audacity to call Him master and betray Him at the very same time.

Matthew 26:50 "And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him."

“And Jesus said unto him, Friend”: It seems strange to us that Jesus should give the endeared name "friend" to a man that he knew was his enemy, and that was about to betray him.

It should be said however, that this is the fault of our language, not of the original. In the Greek there are two words which our translators have rendered "friend". One implying "affection and regard," the other expresses more nearly what we mean by "companion."

It is this "latter" word which is given to the disaffected laborer in the vineyard: "'Friend,' I do thee no wrong" (Matthew 20:13); to the guest which had not on the wedding-garment, in the parable of the marriage feast (Matthew 22:12); and to "Judas" in this place.

“Wherefore art thou come?” This was said, not because he was ignorant why he had come, but probably to fill the mind of Judas with the consciousness of his crime, and by a striking question to compel him to think of what he was doing.

Jesus was fully aware of why Judas was there. This statement was made for Judas. Jesus was saying, some friend you are. This was the signal, and the soldiers took Jesus into custody.

Verses 51-56: "One of them" was Peter (John 18:10), who "drew his sword," probably one of the short swords referred to (in Luke 22:38). Attempting to defend Jesus; Peter "struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear." In a typical impetuous move, Peter had struck the one person who could have embarrassed them the most at the trial.

Luke, a physician (Luke 22:51), tells us that Jesus healed him by replacing the ear (His last miracle before His crucifixion), and (John 18:10), tells us his name was Malchus. Jesus' rebuke "Put up again thy sword" clearly revealed that His kingdom would not be brought in by force before His death.

"They that take the sword shall perish with the sword" is a statement of fact, but cannot be taken by itself to teach nonviolence in all situations. "Twelve legions of angels" could be called to His aid. Each Roman legion had six thousand soldiers. Christ's restraint is due to His willingness to obey the will of the Father and so fulfill "the scriptures."

Matthew 26:51 "And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out [his] hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear."

"One of them": John identifies the swordsman as Peter and the victim as Malchus (John 18:10). Clearly, Peter was not aiming for the ear, but for the head. Only Luke mentions that Jesus healed Malchus' ear.

Peter was rather impulsive, and he was ready to fight to keep them from taking Jesus.

Matthew 26:52 "Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

"Perish with the sword": Peter's action was vigilantism. No matter how unjust the arrest of Jesus, Peter had no right to take the law into his own hands in order to stop it. Jesus' reply was a restatement of the (Gen. 9:6), principle: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed," an affirmation that capital punishment is an appropriate penalty for murder.

Violence and revenge were not what Jesus taught.

Matthew 26:53 "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"

"More than twelve legions": A Roman legion was composed of 6,000 soldiers, so this would represent more than 72,000 angels. In (2 Kings 19:35), a single angel killed more than 185,000 men in a single night, so this many angels would make a formidable army.

Matthew 26:54 "But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

"Scriptures be fulfilled": God Himself had foreordained the very minutest details of how Jesus would die (Acts 2:3; 4:27-28). Dying was Christ's consummate act of submission to the Father's will. Jesus Himself was in absolute control (John 10:17-18). Yet it was not Jesus alone, but

everyone around Him, His enemies included, who fulfilled precisely the details of the Old Testament prophecies. These events display His divine sovereignty (1:22; 5:18; 27:50).

They did not really take Him, He went willingly. Jesus was in control of His own destiny. He did not want to destroy the world. He chose to save it instead. He would fulfill all the Scriptures by dying on the cross for the sin of the world. They did not take His life, He gave it.

Matthew 26:55 "In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me."

“Against a thief”: Rather a "robber." This was the manner in which they would have sought to take a highwayman of desperate character, and armed to defend his life.

It adds not a little to the depth of his humiliation that he consented to be "hunted down" thus by wicked people, and to be treated as if he had been the worst of mankind.

“Daily with you teaching in the temple”: For many days before the Passover, as recorded in the previous chapter.

Matthew 26:56 "But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled."

"Scriptures of the prophets": The "writings" of the prophets, for that is the meaning of the word "scriptures." He alludes to those parts of the prophetic writings which foretold his sufferings and death.

"Then all the disciples": Overcome with fear when they saw their Master actually taken; alarmed with the terrific appearance of armed men and torches in a dark night, and forgetting their promises not to forsake him, they all left their Savior to go alone to trial and to death!

In this, Jesus was willing to go with them, but did not enjoy being treated as a criminal. He said, if you wanted to arrest me, I was in your temple every day, why didn't you take me then? Of course, Jesus knew why they did not take Him.

It would not have filled the Scriptures of Him being the Lamb. Jesus must be killed at Passover time. He must be buried and rise again on first fruits.

Verses 57-68: (see Mark 14:53-72; Luke 22:54-65; John 18:13-27). “Palace:” the open court around which the main buildings were built. “Servants (Greek hyperetes, “officers,” literally “under-rowers”).

The evidence eventually brought forward (verse 61), was based on the Lord’s words recorded (in John 2:19, 21), nearly three years earlier! “I adjure thee by the living God:” This statement put a

man on his oath and compelled an answer. The high priest was seeking an admission that could be the foundation of a charge of blasphemy.

“Thou hast said” means “yes,” and “buffeted” means “punched.” (Verse 68), is a sarcastic demand to be told the names and identities of those who were strangers to Him as a sign of supernatural knowledge.

The incident ends with the charge of “blasphemy” and the indictment that He is “guilty of death.” There can be no doubt that the Sanhedrin took Him to be claiming to be the Messiah, a claim they violently rejected.

Matthew 26:57 "And they that had laid hold on Jesus led [him] away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled."

“Caiaphas the high priest”: From (John 18:13), we learn that Christ was taken first to Annas (former High-Priest and father-in-law to Caiaphas). He then was sent bound to Caiaphas’ house (John 18:24). The conspiracy was well planned, so that “the scribes and the elders” (the Sanhedrin), were already “gathered” at Caiaphas’ house and ready to try Jesus.

The time was sometime between midnight and the first rooster’s crowing (verse 74). Such a hearing was illegal on several counts. Criminal trials were not to be held at night; and trials in capital cases could only be held at the temple and only in public.

For political reasons, Caiaphas had asked the death of Jesus. These scribes and Pharisees wanted His death, as well.

Matthew 26:58 "But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end."

“Peter followed him afar off”: Poor Peter, this is the beginning of his dreadful fall. His fear kept him from joining the company, and publicly acknowledging his Lord; and his affection obliged him to follow at a distance that he might see to the end.

“And sat with the servants, to see the end”: When a man is weak in faith, and can as yet only follow Christ at a distance, he should avoid all dangerous places, and the company of those who are most likely to prove a snare to him. Had not Peter got to the high priest’s palace, and sat down with the servants, he would not thus have denied his Lord and Master.

Matthew 26:59 "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;"

“All the council”: The great Sanhedrin was the Supreme Court of Israel, consisting of 71 members, presided over by the High-Priest. They met daily in the temple to hold court, except on the Sabbath and other holy days. Technically, they did not have the power to administer capital punishment (John 18:3), but in the case of Stephen, for example, this was no deterrent to his stoning (Acts 6:12-14; 7:58-60).

Roman governors evidently sometimes ignored such incidents as a matter of political expediency. In Jesus' case, the men who were trying Him were the same ones who had conspired against Him (John 11:47-50).

Matthew 26:60 "But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, [yet] found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,"

“Found they none”: Even though many were willing to perjure themselves, the Sanhedrin could not find a charge that had enough credibility to indict Jesus. Evidently the “false witnesses” could not agree between themselves.

“At last two false witnesses came up, saying”: This man said, etc. It is the property of falsity to be ever inconsistent, and to contradict itself; therefore, they could not find two consistent testimonies, without which the Jewish law did not permit any person to be put to death.

However, the hand of God was in this business. For the credit of Jesus, and the honor of the Christian religion, he would not permit him to be condemned on a false accusation. And, therefore, at last they were obliged to change their ground, and to the eternal confusion of the unrighteous council, he is condemned on the very evidence of his own innocence, purity, and truth!

Matthew 26:61 "And said, This [fellow] said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days."

“Destroy the temple of God” (see John 2:19-21). The witnesses' account was a distortion of Jesus' meaning. (Mark 14:58), gives a fuller account of their testimony.

It seems that most of these chief priests and elders were really not interested with the truth. They just wanted to get rid of Jesus. They were even willing to hire false witnesses to produce enough false evidence to get the Romans to pronounce sentence on Him.

At first they could not find witnesses to testify against Jesus, and then they finally found two. By their law two witnesses were enough witnesses to convict Him. The Bible itself, says by two witnesses a thing can be established. They did not understand that the temple that Jesus had spoken of was His body.

Matthew 26:62 "And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what [is it which] these witness against thee?"

“Answerest thou nothing?” The accusation was so completely frivolous that it merited no notice: besides, Jesus knew that they were determined to put him to death, and that his hour was come. And that therefore rebuttal or defense would be of no use: he had often before borne sufficient testimony to the truth.

Caiaphas was trying to make Jesus say something that could be used against Him. He was trying to get Jesus to accuse the witnesses of lying.

Matthew 26:63 "But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

“Adjure thee”: Caiaphas was trying to break Jesus’ silence (verse 62), by placing Him under oath. The oath was supposed to make Him legally obligated to reply. Jesus’ answer (verse 64), implies acceptance of the oath.

Here, the high priest changed to an entirely different subject. This was the real reason Jesus had been brought before Caiaphas. Here, if Jesus said He was the Christ the Son of God, and then they would shout blasphemy, and say that they should kill Him. If He said He wasn’t, then they would ask by what authority had He been preaching and healing.

Matthew 26:64 "Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

The imagery was taken from (Psalm 110:1 and Dan. 7:13).

Jesus said to him, you said it. Jesus went even further and said He would be sitting at the right hand of God. Jesus also told him that He would come back in the clouds of heaven. This left no doubt. Jesus had let Caiaphas know beyond a shadow of a doubt that He (Jesus), was the only begotten of the Father. The Messiah!

Matthew 26:65 "Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy."

“Then the high priest rent his clothes”: Normally this was an expression of deep grief (2 Kings 19:1; Job 1:20; Jer. 36:24). The High-Priest was forbidden to tear his clothes (Lev. 10:6; 21:10), but the Talmud made an exception for High-Priests who witnessed a blasphemy. But Caiaphas’ supposed grief was as phony as the charge of blasphemy against Jesus; he was gloating over having found something to base his charges on (verse 67).

Matthew 26:66 "What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death."

“What think ye?” What is your opinion? What sentence do you pronounce? As President of the Sanhedrin he demanded their judgment. He is guilty of death, This was the form which was used when a criminal was condemned to die. The meaning is, he is guilty of a crime to which the law annexes death.

This sentence was used before the Jews became subject to the Romans, when they had the power of inflicting death. After they were subject to the Romans, though the power of inflicting capital punishment" was taken away, yet they retained the form when they expressed their opinion of the guilt of an offender.

The law under which they condemned him was that recorded (in Leviticus 24:10-16), which sentenced him that was guilty of blasphemy to death by stoning. The chief priests however, were unwilling to excite a popular tumult by stoning him, and they therefore consulted to deliver him to the Romans to be crucified, "under the authority of the Roman name," and thus to prevent any excitement among the people.

Matthew 26:67 "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote [him] with the palms of their hands,"

"Then did they spit in his face": This, among the Jews, as among us, was significant of the highest contempt and insult (Numbers 12:14; Isaiah 50:6; Job 30:10).

"And buffeted him": That is, they struck him with their hands closed, or with the fist.

"Others smote him with the palms of their hands": The word used in the original here means literally to strike with rods. It also means to strike the mouth with the open hand, as if to prevent a person's speaking, or to evince abhorrence of what he had spoken.

Matthew 26:68 "Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?"

"Prophecy unto us, thou Christ": Their conduct toward him now was expressly prophesied of, by a man whose Divine mission they did not pretend to deny (see Isaiah 50:6). It appears that, before they buffeted him, they bound up his eyes (see Mark 14:65).

Verses 69-72: Peter's three denials (Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-65), occur during the trial proceedings. "Peter sat without in the palace" or courtyard. The first denial is prompted by a damsel, or young maid, and the porters who had admitted him and John. The form of the denial, "I know not what thou sayest," is merely a pretense of ignorance on Peter's part.

Feeling the pressure of the interrogation, Peter goes "into the porch," a passageway leading to the street. Then he is confronted by "another maid," probably the outer gatekeeper, who alerted the men (thus Luke's reference to a man as the interrogator) that "this fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth."

The terms "Galilean" and "Nazarene" were probably used in a derogatory manner by these Judeans. This time his denial was stronger, "with an oath," in spite of Jesus' earlier warning against oath-taking (5:34).

Matthew 26:69 "Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee."

Mark says the first denial took place while Peter was "beneath in the palace." This "palace" was the large hall or court belonging to the residence of the high priest. The part of it where Jesus and the council were, was "elevated," probably above the rest for a tribunal.

Peter was "beneath or in the "lower part" of the hall, with the servants at the fire. Yet, as Matthew says, he sat without in the palace, that is, out of the palace where they were trying Jesus. In other words, in the lower part of the hall with the servants: both narratives are therefore consistent.

And a damsel came unto him (John 18:17), says that this damsel was one that kept the door.

"Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee": Probably she suspected him from his being in company with John. This was in the early part of the trial of Jesus.

Matthew 26:70 "But he denied before [them] all, saying, I know not what thou sayest."

"But he denied before them all": Which was a very great aggravation of his sin; for, as it is to a man's commendation to profess a good profession of Christ before many witnesses, so it is to his disgrace, and is resented by Christ, to deny him before men.

He did not deny that Christ was God, or the Son of God, or that he was come in the flesh, or that Jesus was the Christ, or that he was the only Savior of sinners; but that he was with him, or one of his disciples.

"I know not what thou sayest": which was a very great falsehood. He denied that which was most true; he had been with him from the beginning, and had heard all his discourses, and seen his miracles. He had been with him at particular times, and in particular places, when and where some others of the disciples were not admitted, as at the raising of Jairus' daughter, at the transfiguration in the mount, and in the garden very lately.

He now denies that he had been with him; or that he knew what was meant by such an expression. He denied that he was a disciple of Christ, which was his greatest character, and highest glory. This denial did not arise from any diffidence of his being one, or from a sense of his unworthiness to be one, but from the fear of man, which brought this snare upon him.

And the more his weakness is discovered in it, that he should be intimidated by a servant maid into such a denial, who but a few hours before had confidently affirmed, that though he should die with Christ, he would not deny him. And who had so courageously drawn his sword in his master's cause, in the face of a band of soldiers, and a multitude of armed men with swords and staves. This was his first denial; a second follows.

Matthew 26:71 "And when he was gone out into the porch, another [maid] saw him, and said unto them that were there, This [fellow] was also with Jesus of Nazareth."

"And when he was gone out into the porch": He did not attempt to go out at the door, and run away, though he could gladly have done it; but he feared to do this, as this could discover him, they should pursue him, and overtake him, and bring him before the Sanhedrim. He chose rather to keep his ground, but was very uneasy; and therefore moved into the porch, where he sat very pensive, considering what was proper for him to do.

“Another maid saw him”: and said unto them that were there, this fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. She speaks of Christ in the same contemptuous manner, as her fellow servant had done. For this appellation of Christ was commonly, if not always used by way of contempt; and she means the same thing by his being with him as the other did.

But she is rather more spiteful, and bent on mischief. The other addressed him alone, and what she said, said to herself; but this directs her speech to the servants and officers that were near at hand, and uses him in a very scurrilous manner: this sorry fellow, that is sauntering and lurking about here, is certainly one of this man's disciples.

Matthew 26:72 "And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man."

“And again he denied with an oath”: He has told a lie, and he swears to support it. A liar has always some suspicion that his testimony is not credited, for he is conscious to his own falsity, and is therefore naturally led to support his assertions by oaths.

Verses 73-75: The third denial comes “after a while” (less than an hour), when he is accused because “thy speech betrayeth thee” or “makes you evident” or “gives you away.” Under the mounting emotional pressure and fear of being condemned along with Jesus, “began he to curse and to swear.”

After the Resurrection, this outburst of denial was corrected by an emotion-packed reaffirmation of loyalty to the Savior (John 21:17). “And immediately the cock crew” was probably “cockcrow” (the end of the Roman watch from midnight to 3 a.m.), “verifying the illegitimacy of the trial which was being conducted during the middle of the night.

“And Peter remembered,” not because he heard the noise, but as Luke (22:61), records: The Lord turned and looked upon him with a convicting glance from the balcony of the high priest’s house. Then he remembered the Savior’s warning and “went out, and wept bitterly.”

All these events related to the betrayal, arrest, and trial of Jesus show that He was completely in control of each situation even while being in the hands of His captors.

Matthew 26:73 "And after a while came unto [him] they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art [one] of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee."

"And after a while": That is, about an hour after (Luke). Peter by this time had returned into the palace or hall, and stood warming himself by the fire (John 18:25).

“Thy speech betrayeth thee”: Your language makes it manifest that you are of his company. That is, as Mark adds, he was a "Galilean," and in this way his speech betrayed him. It is probable that the Galileans were distinguished for some peculiarity of pronunciation, perhaps some unique rusticity or coarseness in their manner of speaking, that distinguished them from the refinement of the capital, Jerusalem.

This charge John says (John 18:26), was supported by the express affirmation of a kinsman of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, that he had seen him in the garden.

Matthew 26:74 "Then began he to curse and to swear, [saying], I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew."

“Then began he to curse and to swear”: I.e., calling on God as his witness, Peter declared, “I do not know the man!” and pronounced a curse of death on himself at God’s hand if his words were untrue. All 4 gospels recorded Peter’s betrayal (verses 31-35).

Matthew 26:75 "And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly."

“And Peter remembered”: (Luke 22:61), records that Jesus made eye contact with Peter at this very moment, which must have magnified Peter’s already unbearable sense of shame.

“He went out”, evidently departing from Caiaphas’ house, “and wept bitterly.”

The true Peter is seen not in his denial but in his repentance. This account reminds us of not only our own weakness, but also the richness of divine grace (see also John 21:15-19).

These three denials that had been prophesied by Jesus were progressive in nature. First Peter just denied, the second time he added an oath, and the third time Peter added cursing. How sad when the cock crows, and Peter realized what he had done; and worse, who Jesus really was. God the Son, Christ, Messiah.

Matthew Chapter 26 third Continued Questions

1. Who came with Judas to get Jesus?
2. Who sent them?
3. What did they bring with them?
4. What was the sign Judas had given them?
5. What did Judas call Jesus?
6. What did Jesus call Judas?
7. What did Peter do to Malchus?
8. What did Jesus say to Peter?
9. What miracle did Jesus do?

10. If Jesus prayed to the Father, how many angels would come?
11. Jesus could destroy the world, but what did He want to do instead?
12. Where was Jesus daily?
13. Why did they capture Him then?
14. What happened to the disciples?
15. What caused them to do this?
16. To fulfill the Scripture, when must Jesus die?
17. What was the name of the high priest?
18. Which disciple followed at a distance?
19. How many false witnesses did they finally get?
20. What did they say Jesus said?
21. What temple was Jesus speaking of?
22. By how many witnesses is something established?
23. The high priest asked Jesus to tell him if He was _____
_____.
24. How did Jesus answer?
25. What did the high priest do after Jesus answered?
26. What three humiliating things did they do to Jesus?
27. How many accused Peter of knowing Jesus?
28. Explain how Peter's answers progressed into worse sin?
29. When the cock crew, what did Peter do?