

Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, *that* He said to His disciples, ²“You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” ³ Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, ⁴ and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill *Him*. ⁵ But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.” ⁶ And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, ⁷ a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured *it* on His head as He sat *at the table*. ⁸ But when His disciples saw *it*, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste? ⁹ For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to *the poor*.” ¹⁰ But when Jesus was aware of *it*, He said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. ¹¹ For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. ¹² For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did *it* for My burial. ¹³ Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.” ¹⁴ Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵ and said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him. ¹⁷ Now on the first *day of the Feast* of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?” ¹⁸ And He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.”’” ¹⁹ So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover. ²⁰ When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. ²¹ Now as they were eating, He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.” ²² And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, “Lord, is it I?” ²³ He answered and said, “He who dipped *his* hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. ²⁴ The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.” ²⁵ Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, “Rabbi, is it I?” He said to him, “You have said it.” ²⁶ And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” ²⁷ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. ²⁹ But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” ³⁰ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Introduction

For all the important things in life, we usually make preparations.

Golden week is an important time in the life of many Japanese people. It is only 7 weeks away now and if you have not made preparations for your trip you might find it difficult to get a hotel room. Most of the hotels around Mount Fuji are already fully booked.

My daughter Charis made preparations for the birth of her twins at least 6 months before their birth. She was busy buying all the things that she would need. It took some time to choose the right baby buggy (Baby Car) as this was the most expensive purchase.

I think most people prepare for the things that are important for them.

However, I have discovered that very few people make preparations for their death. I have taken about 40 funeral services over the last 20 years and the services that have been the best have been services that were prepared in advance by the person who died.

The deceased person, long before their death, chose the songs and hymns that they wanted sung and wrote out a short life story that they wanted to be read at their funeral. They also requested the passage that the Pastor should preach at their funeral.

Their preparation made my life much easier and I was able to deliver the service with a strong conviction that it was the best for the family who were attending.

Any criticism of the service could then be addressed to the deceased person and not to me.

Needless to say there were no critics at these services and they all went well.

In the first of our Easter series, we begin with what I am calling "Preparing for Christ's Death"

The death of Jesus was the most important event of his ministry and He wanted His disciples to be adequately prepared for this.

Matthew used three events to teach us how Jesus prepared for His death. There are two main ones and one small incident that assured the arrest of Jesus.

These were the anointing of the body of Jesus with a costly perfume, Judas agreeing to betray Jesus and also the celebration of the last "Passover" that Jesus would have with His disciples.

Before we look at these three incidents in detail we need to focus upon verses 1-5 of chapter 26.

We are told that after a major teaching session between Jesus and His disciples that He informed them exactly when He was going to die.

Jesus told His disciples that after two days they would be celebrating the Jewish Festival of Passover and it was at that time He would be delivered up to be crucified.

It is important to note that Jesus chose the time of the Passover for His death.

There would be no other time in the Jewish Calendar where it would have been appropriate for Jesus to die.

The Passover is directly connected to the death of Jesus in many ways.

On April the 9th we will hear about all the connections between Jesus and the Passover, however I would just like to mention the most important one.

The most important connection is the death of the lamb and it's shed blood as a covering against the wrath of God.

From the very beginning God has required the death of an animal as a substitute sacrifice for man's sin. Instead of man dying for his own sin, the animal would take man's place and satisfy God's Holy requirements.

In John Chapter 1: v. 29 when John first saw Jesus he said "Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

John was convinced that the purpose of Jesus coming to this earth was to die a sacrificial death, just like a lamb, in order to take away the sin of the world.

So as the Jews celebrated the fact that the blood of a lamb applied to their homes in Egypt many years ago, saved them from the death of their first born, so Jesus was now about to be their "Passover Lamb" who would save them from their sin, and God's wrath.

Passover was the only appropriate time in the year for Jesus to die, and this is why He chose this time.

By predicting the time of His death Jesus showed that He had authority to decide this event.

There were many times when people sought to kill Jesus, but they were unable to do so.

Right at the start of the ministry of Jesus, the Jewish people tried to kill Him.

John Chapter 5: v. 18. (N.K.J.)

¹⁸ Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

Although we are told in v. 3 that the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders assembled in the palace of the high priest to form a plan to kill Jesus, Jesus was in control of these events.

Application

I would like to stop briefly for a moment and make an important application here. The application is that Jesus is in control of all the events of our lives, both negative and positive. The good and the bad.

For Jesus personally His death was a very bad experience. In fact it was the worst possible way to die. It was so bad that in the end, the Romans stopped doing crucifixion as a death punishment.

For Jesus His death was really bad and it hurt Him deeply, because He was fully man and fully God. He felt pain, just like us.

But for us, the death of Jesus is a very positive experience. Without the death of Jesus there would be NO SALVATION for us.

There would be NO HEAVEN for us when we die.

Jesus allowed His bad experience so that we might benefit and receive a very good experience.

We all like to receive good experiences from Jesus, but sometimes we don't like to receive bad experiences from Jesus.

We think that Jesus has made a mistake or is not being kind to us for some reason.

I want to encourage you today by telling you that everything from the hands of Jesus, good or bad is shaping our lives for the very best that Jesus has for us in the future.

We don't see the big picture, but Jesus does. We see and feel the pain, Jesus sees Heaven and the gain.

Even our death experience which might be quite negative is the gateway to heaven and our eternal bodies.

Be encouraged today, that if you know and love Jesus as your personal Saviour, all your experiences, good or bad have been filtered through the hands of Jesus.

Jesus said "I will never leave you or forsake you.." (Hebrews 13: v.5)

We now come to the three preparation events before Jesus is arrested.

1. The Anointing of Jesus at Bethany – v. 6-13.

While Jesus and His disciples were in Bethany, which was not far from Jerusalem, they were invited for a meal at the house of Simon the Leper. It is likely that Simon was healed of His leprosy by Jesus and this was a "Thank You" meal as an appreciation of his healing.

During the meal a woman, who was not identified by Matthew, but John tells us it was Mary, (John 12: v.3) came to Jesus with an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil which she poured on the head of Jesus.

John Chapter 12: v. 5 tells us that this expensive perfume oil cost 300 denarii in money. This was equivalent to one year's wages for the average labourer.

This would be nearly 3 million yen in Japanese money.

Imagine some Japanese lady spending 3 million yen on some expensive perfume.!!!!

That would be very extravagant. However, what would you think if she poured it all over somebody in one go.

You would probably think that was very wasteful thing to do. You might be right.

However, the situation here was a little different.

The person receiving the perfume was no ordinary person.

The person receiving the oil was the Son of God, who was shortly about to do the most sacrificial act in human history.

Jesus was soon to die for the sins of the whole world.

Jesus was about to pay the ultimate sacrifice.

So for Jesus to receive this fragrant oil was not a waste of money.

In fact, it equated with what Jesus was about to do.

The gift of perfume was a sacrifice in terms of money and Jesus was about to sacrifice His life for the sins of the whole world.

The second thing to note about this incident was the woman who gave the perfume oil.

It is clear that she knew what was going on in this situation.

She seemed to have more wisdom than the disciples.

She was very practical and very thoughtful about the future.

She had the wisdom of God to know what was going to happen in a few days.

What could you do for a man who has helped you so much and was just about to die for your sins.?

Quite clearly give Him the most expensive thing you have.

In her case it was very expensive perfume oil.

One thing is for sure and that is, Jesus supported her actions 100%.

Jesus said what she did was the best thing she could have done with that perfume oil.

Jesus declared that the sacrificial act was in keeping with the preparation for His burial.

In fact, Jesus said that this sacrificial act by Mary was going to be a witness to everybody in the world when the gospel is preached.

Sacrifices for Jesus never go unnoticed by Jesus, and Jesus rewards people for their sacrifices, according to His wisdom.

In this case, being a witness to the world for 2,000 years for Mary is a wonderful reward.

Application

There is a wonderful application here for us to take into our lives here and now.

The application is very clear to me.

If we really appreciate and understand all that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ means to us personally, we will want to say "Thank You" to Jesus in some way.

We do this by giving our very best to Him, not our left overs.

We do this by giving Jesus the best of our money, the best of our talents, the best of our time, and we do this willingly.

We may not think that we have very much to offer Jesus, but if we give Him the very best of what we do have, then not only will we be blessed and fulfilled in our lives, but Jesus will be blessed too as He appreciates our "Worship" for Him.

In v. 11 Jesus said that spending time with Him was more important than good work programmes, however important they might be.

Sometimes it is more sacrificial to sit down and pray and read your Bible than it is to do some activity for Jesus.

Quiet times with Jesus, are precious for us and also for Jesus.

Don't neglect them in your service for Him.

We now move on to the next incident in the preparation for the death of Jesus.

2. Judas agrees to betray Jesus – v. 14-16.

In between the two major events that Matthew records, he includes the incident of Judas agreeing to betray Jesus.

There are only three verses given over to this incident but the incident is nevertheless important.

From the New Testament we have the idea that Judas Iscariot was very interested in money. He was in charge of the finances for the ministry of Jesus and the disciples as they travelled around Israel.

John Chapter 12: v. 4-6. (N.K.J.)

⁴ But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, ⁵ "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" ⁶ This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

So we see that Judas had an unhealthy interest in money and what it could buy for him.

The first question that Judas asked the chief priests was "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?"

Then in reply to his question they counted out 30 pieces of silver.

Thirty pieces of silver was roughly equivalent to 5 weeks of wages.

It was also the price paid to compensate a slave owner.

Turn with me to Exodus 21: v. v. 32. (in the N.K.J.)

³² If the ox gores a male or female servant, he shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

What is interesting is Zechariah's prophecy concerning this incident and the subsequent use of this money.

Turn with me to Zechariah Chapter 11: v. 4-13.

(New Living Translation.)

⁴ This is what the LORD my God says: "Go and care for the flock that is intended for slaughter. ⁵ The buyers slaughter their sheep without remorse. The sellers say, 'Praise the LORD! Now I'm rich!' Even the shepherds have no compassion for them. ⁶ Likewise, I will no longer have pity on the people of the land," says the LORD. "I will let them fall into each other's hands and into the hands of their king. They will turn the land into a wilderness, and I will not rescue them." ⁷ So I cared for the flock intended for slaughter—the flock that was oppressed. Then I took two shepherd's staffs and named one Favor and the other Union. ⁸ I got rid of their three evil shepherds in a single month. But I became impatient with these sheep, and they hated me, too. ⁹ So I told them, "I won't be your shepherd any longer. If you die, you die. If you are killed, you are killed. And let those who remain devour each other!" ¹⁰ Then I took my staff called Favor and cut it in two, showing that I had revoked the covenant I had made with all the nations. ¹¹ That was the end of my

covenant with them. The suffering flock was watching me, and they knew that the LORD was speaking through my actions. ¹² And I said to them, "If you like, give me my wages, whatever I am worth; but only if you want to." So they counted out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. ¹³ And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—this magnificent sum at which they valued me! So I took the thirty coins and threw them to the potter in the Temple of the LORD.

Zechariah was quoting what God said to him.

In the middle of God dealing with unfaithful Shepherds of Israel, God asked what He was worth in v. 12.

They counted out 30 pieces of silver. That was all that God was worth.

God said "throw it to the Potter"

This is exactly what happened.

Turn with me to Matthew Chapter 27: v. 1-10. (in N.K.J.)

When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death.

² And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

³ Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, ⁴ saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."

And they said, "What *is that* to us? You see *to it!*" ⁵ Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. ⁶ But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." ⁷ And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. ⁸ Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced,

¹⁰ and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me."

So 538 years before the incident concerning Judas and his 30 pieces of silver, God predicted that it would happen, and it happened just as God said it would. This is amazing.

So we move on to the final event in this section and that is Jesus celebrating his last Passover.

3. Jesus celebrates His last Passover – v. 17-30.

If you have a N.K. J. Bible or an N.I.V. you will notice that we are told that it was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread. (v. 17)

In the Jewish Calendar at this time, the Feast of Unleavened bread and Passover were combined in order to make an eight- day celebration.

This celebration began with the "Passover".

The two names of these festivals were interchangeable and they were referred to differently depending on who you spoke to.

It is clear that the day that we are talking about here was "Passover"

According to Old Testament Law, Passover was celebrated only on the first day of the fourteenth day of Nisan.

The Feast of the Unleavened Bread followed from the 15th through to the 21st of Nisan.

We need not look up these references but they are on the written script.

(Passover and Unleavened Bread – Exodus 12 and 34: v. 18)

This is the last time that Jesus would have to spend with His disciples and to teach them and encourage them.

We do not have a full script of what happened on this last day, but we will concentrate on what Mathew has told us about this last day.

Matthew tells us three things about this last day.

1. Jesus told his disciples to make preparations for Passover.
2. Jesus identified His betrayer.
3. Jesus identified Himself with the Bread and the wine of the Passover Meal.

1. Jesus designated His disciples to make preparations for Passover.

In v. 18 it says that Jesus told His disciples to go into Jerusalem and meet somebody. We are not told the identity of the man. The disciples were told to say “ **The teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.**”

It is likely that Jesus had made previous arrangements concerning where He would celebrate the Passover. The identity of the place was kept secret to avoid a premature arrest. Judas may have betrayed Jesus at this time if he had known where the Passover would take place.

It would have taken some time to make preparations for the last Passover meal that Jesus would celebrate with His disciples.

It is likely that the person’s home where they would celebrate the Passover would have made all the preparations.

Their first job was to find a male lamb without any defect. It had to be perfect. They were not allowed to break any of the bones of this lamb.

They would also have had to select some bitter herbs to remind them of the difficult 400 years that the Jewish nation spent in Egypt.

They would also need some wine to remind them of the shed blood of the lamb that was applied to the door posts and lintel of the Jewish homes on the first Passover.

I have three questions to ask about the selection of the lamb for Passover.

1. Q. Why did it have to be a male lamb?
2. Q. Why did the lamb have to be perfect without any defects?
3. Q. Why were they not allowed to break any of its bones?

The simple answer is that the Passover, although a real experience in the life of the Israelite nations, always pointed towards the death of Jesus on the cross.

Jesus was male, He was perfect, without sin and none of his bones were broken on the cross in spite of the fact that it was the custom of the Roman Soldiers to break the bones of everybody who was crucified. (John 19: v. 31-37 –in N.K.J.)

³¹ Therefore, because it was the Preparation *Day*, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. ³² Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. ³⁵ And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. ³⁶ For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, “Not *one* of His bones shall be broken.” ³⁷ And again another Scripture says, “They shall look on Him whom they pierced.”

So the Passover was prepared for Jesus and His disciples, according to the instructions given by God, about 1,446 years before this event.

2. Jesus Identified His betrayer – v. 20-25.

In v. 20-25 we are told by Matthew that Jesus identified His betrayer. Jesus publicly said to all of His disciples, “ Assuredly I say to you, one of you will betray me.”

What is interesting is that in v. 22 “all” of His disciples said “Lord is it I.” By making this remark, all of the disciples were saying that they didn’t know who could possibly betray Jesus, surely not one of the disciples.

At this time Judas was openly living a lie amongst the disciples, and with Jesus.

In v. 23 Jesus said “He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me”

The dish in question would have contained the bitter herbs that were eaten to remember the difficult time that the nation of Israel suffered for 400 years before they were rescued from Egypt.

The bitter herbs now pointed to the bitter betrayer, Judas.

However, God was still in control of the events that would follow.

John MacArthur in his commentary says this about these verses.

“Judas’s malicious decision to reject and betray Christ was used by God in fulfilling Christ’s gracious mission of redemption. An unholy man in the hands of a holy God was used to accomplish a holy purpose.”

God in using Judas to accomplish His purposes, did not make Judas a saint, in fact we are told in v. 24 that Judas was going to receive such an awful punishment that it would have been better if he had not been born.

In v. 25 Jesus told Judas that he was the “traitor”, he was the one who would betray Jesus.

It is absolutely amazing that somebody could spend 3 years living alongside Jesus and yet for a small amount of money, betray Him.

Judas witnessed people being healed of sicknesses, somebody being raised from the dead, the blind receiving their sight and the lame walking, 5,000 people being fed from a small packed lunch and the wind and the waves obeying His commands.

All these miracles and compassionate acts, pointing to the “divinity” of Jesus and yet Judas for a little money betrayed Jesus.

Q. How could Judas do this?

The answer is simple. Like us Judas was born with a sinful heart.

Judas did not recognise the sinfulness of his own heart.

Jeremiah 17: v. 9 says “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

Judas valued money more than the solution to his own sinful heart.

Jesus said that the cleansing and forgiveness of our sinful hearts is worth more than all money in the whole world.

Mark 8: v. 34-38.

³⁴ When He had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ³⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷ Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

The question we need to ask ourselves today is where is our heart?

Has our heart been forgiven and cleansed in the blood of Jesus?

It is a heart that is willing to follow Jesus?

Or is it a heart that wishes to go our own way in life, ignoring the consequences of a sinful heart in all that will come in the future, whatever that might be.

Judas had all the opportunity to follow Jesus with a clean heart, but chose to sell his soul for a little money.

Jesus is worth much more than a little bit of money, He is worth our lives.

Q. Will you give your heart fully to Jesus today?

3. Jesus identified Himself with the bread and the wine of the Passover meal – v. 26-30.

The breaking of the unleavened bread was a normal part of the traditional Passover ceremony.

Jesus was now giving it an entirely new meaning.

He was pointing to the bread and making it a “Symbol” of His body.

The original unleavened bread symbolized severance from the old life in Egypt. It represented a separation from worldliness and sin and the beginning of a new life of holiness and godliness.

By His own divine authority Jesus transformed that symbolism into another one.

From now on the bread at Passover would represent Christ’s own body, sacrificed for the Salvation of men and women.

It was going to be a “New Life” for everybody who trusted in the death of Jesus Christ.
Jesus then held up a glass of wine which was part of the ‘Passover’ celebration and declared it to be His blood of the “New Covenant”
When God made covenants in the Bible, all of those covenants were ratified(sealed) with blood.
(Genesis 8: v. 20, 15: v.9-10)
Hebrews Chapter 9: v. 22.

²² And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

Jesus tells us in v. 28 that this “New Covenant” was being introduced for the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus was prepared to give up His life and die a sacrificial death, so that in the future, those who believed in Him might have forgiveness of their personal sins against a Holy God.
Jesus identified Himself as the substitute sacrifice.
He would die in the place of others.
His life to save the life of others.
The question I would like to ask you in closing is this.
Q. Is Jesus Christ your substitute sacrifice?