



Who Is Jesus?

LESSON FOUR

A Series of Five
Bible Studies Exploring
*"The Gospel According
to Matthew"*

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Previously published in booklet form.



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Revised 2002

The Int'l Lutheran Laymen's League, with its outreach through Lutheran Hour Ministries, is an auxiliary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Lutheran Church—Canada.

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LESSON FOUR

Introduction

We are looking at events which occurred some two thousand years ago in a place thousands of miles away to a Man that never traveled more than a few hundred miles from His hometown. Nevertheless, these are events which impact people's lives today; people here in this place—a place He never saw while He was alive. These are the events of the last week of our Lord's earthly life. We began studying this busy week in Lesson Three. In Lesson Four we will study the betrayal and the first, illegal trial of Jesus by the Jewish religious leaders. But before the sadness there is time for a celebration.

Read Matthew 26–28 before proceeding.

Jesus Celebrates with His Disciples

(Chapter 26:17-29)

The time for the Passover feast had come. It was time for God's people to remember His love and deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The feast itself required the sacrifice of a Passover Lamb and a special dinner, which included many foods as a reminder of God's love toward His people.

Jesus had His disciples prepare a place to celebrate this meal together. As they sat around the table dipping pieces of bread into a thick broth called “sop,” Jesus told the disciples that one of them would betray Him. They were shocked and surprised and began to ask, “Is it I?” “You don’t mean me!?” Jesus knew what was in Judas’ heart and He told Judas that He knew.

Verses 26-28 highlight something very significant Jesus did during the Passover meal. It was customary for the head of the house to bless and break the bread at a meal. Jesus took the unleavened bread, did this, and gave it to the disciples saying, “*Take and eat; this is My body*” (v. 26). The Passover ritual also included special cups of wine that would be passed among the guests. Jesus took the cup, again gave thanks to God, and passed it to the disciples. This time He said, “*Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins*” (v. 27-28).

Believers call this meal The Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion. After the resurrection, the disciples and all who came to know Jesus as Savior shared this meal whenever they gathered. They, and WE, believe that in this meal Jesus actually gives us His Holy body and blood. It is truly a supernatural event—but, Jesus is God and with God,

nothing is impossible. Some churches do not believe that Jesus' body and blood are truly present in The Lord's Supper. Yet, Jesus' words were clear when He spoke to His disciples. (To get an idea of how the early church viewed this meal you might want to read the Apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11:23-27. Are Paul's words clear about this meal?)

It is a joy to share this meal with other followers of the Lord. In it Jesus continues to offer forgiveness of sins and strengthening of faith! And the disciples needed this strengthening as much as we do today ... for the most terrifying hours of their lives were just beginning!

Things to Consider...

Read the account of the first Passover (Exodus 12:1-28). Also read Jeremiah 31:31-34. The Apostle Paul calls Jesus the Passover Lamb sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7). Putting this information together with Jesus' words in Matthew 26:17-29, why is the Lord's Supper important?

Jesus in the Garden

(Chapter 26:30-46)

After Jesus celebrated the Passover and The Lord's Supper with His disciples, they left Jerusalem and went to the nearby Mount of Olives where there was a garden area similar to a park. Even today one can walk through the park-like olive groves that cover the lower portions of this hill just outside the old walls of Jerusalem. It was the perfect quiet place for Jesus to spend time in prayer with His heavenly Father regarding the pain and trials He was about to experience.

Jesus had already told His disciples that they would desert Him as the evening progressed (v. 31). This was in fulfillment of a prophecy found in Zechariah 13:7. Jesus was not going to run away from them, though. He told them that after He had risen from the dead He would meet with them in Galilee. Of course the disciples argued that they would NEVER desert Him in His time of need, but Jesus knew it would be true.

The garden area that Jesus chose was called Gethsemane. He told the disciples to sit and wait for Him while He took Peter, James, and John with Him a little further into the garden. Jesus asked

these three to stay awake and pray with Him about what was going to happen.

It is interesting to consider what Jesus said when He prayed to His Father in heaven. He knew the pain and suffering that was going to be inflicted upon Him—torture at the hands of men—and, because He was to bear the punishment for ALL sin, He would bear the entire punishment of God! He asked that, if possible, the “cup” of suffering pass from Him. He asked if the Father could find a different way to accomplish man’s salvation, but He ended His prayer with some important words: He asked that His Father’s will be done. He would be obedient to the One who sent Him. Three times Jesus prayed. The strain on Him was so great that He began to sweat drops of blood (Luke 22:44). (This physical phenomenon only occurs when someone is undergoing *tremendous* stress.) Even His disciples were no comfort during this troubled time. Between each prayer, Jesus returned to find Peter, James, and John asleep.

Finally He woke them and they returned to the other disciples. He said the time was near for the Son of Man to be betrayed. He did not run away. He went to meet His betrayer.

Review and Apply:

Choose either “Y” or “N” for each of the following:

1. Jesus was angry because He knew that all of the disciples would run away from Him when the going got tough. Y or N
2. By his response, Peter showed that he really did not understand that what was taking place and what would take place had been foretold and was now happening in fulfillment of Scripture. Y or N
3. Jesus’ prayer in the garden teaches us that obedience to God’s will is more important than getting our way. Y or N

Things to Consider...

1. In Matthew 16:21-23, Jesus told His disciples that He would have to suffer and die, and then rise from the dead. We see Peter reacting in much the same way he did when Jesus said the disciples would all fall away (Matthew 26:31-35). Read Jesus’ stern reaction to Peter as found in Matthew 16:23. Why didn’t Jesus confront Peter in this same way in 26:31-35?

2. In this section of Scripture we see the two natures of Jesus—that He was both True God and True Man. How is this shown?

Jesus is Betrayed!

(Chapter 26:47–56)

Jesus knew that Judas would be His betrayer. Judas was already on his way along with a crowd of soldiers and the religious leaders. They were armed with swords and clubs—as if afraid that Jesus and His disciples would cause a riot. Because it was night and the garden was dark, Judas told the people that he would kiss the man known as Jesus. For these people the question was not, “Who is Jesus?” but rather, “Which one is Jesus?”

Judas answered their question with his kiss. The men rushed forward to grab Jesus. One of the disciples swung a sword and cut off the ear of the high priest’s slave. Jesus turned to His disciple and commanded him to put the sword away. Jesus reminded the disciples that He was going willingly. If He really wanted to get away He could appeal or pray to His heavenly Father, and 12 legions of angels (72,000) could be sent to help Him. In verse 54, Jesus makes the point, though, that if He did this,

the Scriptures and prophecies relating to Him would not be fulfilled. All that was happening frightened the disciples and they ran away (v. 56). Jesus was deserted—as He had told them.

Things to Consider...

The action of one of the disciples to draw a sword and defend Jesus seems like a logical thing to do ... yet Jesus rebukes him. Is violence ever valid in the work of the church?

Peter Finds that Jesus' Words were True!

(Chapter 26:57–75)

Jesus was led away by the mob and taken to Caiaphas, the High Priest of the Jewish people. Legally, the religious leaders were forbidden from holding court at night, but they hated Jesus and wanted to get rid of Him as quickly as possible. They needed to come up with an accusation and charge they could use at the real trial in the morning. They gathered several false witnesses to testify, but they could not get two witnesses to tell the same story! Finally, two men came in and said that Jesus had claimed that He could tear down the temple and rebuild it in three days.

(It was considered a crime against God for a Jew to speak against the temple.)

Jesus would not respond to the accusations and this infuriated the High Priest. So, in exasperation, he commanded Jesus to tell them with an oath if He was really "*the Christ, the Son of God*" (v. 63). Under oath, Jesus answered, "*Yes*" (v. 64). When the High Priest heard this he knew they had Him. Jesus had claimed to be God. (For a Jew to make himself equal to God was considered blasphemy and punishable by death.) The religious leaders were extremely pleased with themselves and since their task was done, they passed time by torturing the One they despised.

Some of the disciples followed the crowd to see where they would take Jesus. Peter waited in the courtyard outside the High Priest's house. He could not tell what was going on inside, but wanted to be close. Soon, a woman who claimed he was a friend of Jesus confronted him. Peter denied her claim and moved away. Another woman saw him and said the same thing. Peter swore and cursed and denied he knew Jesus. A group gathered around him and said they could tell by the way he talked that he came from Galilee (where Jesus also came from), therefore he **MUST** be one of His followers. Once again Peter denied Jesus with very harsh, angry, foul

words. No sooner had he finished than he heard the rooster crow and remembered what Jesus had said—and how he had responded! He ran from the courtyard crying.

Review and Apply:

Choose the best answer:

1. Why did the Jewish leaders think Jesus should be put to death?
 - a. He made fun of the temple.
 - b. He wouldn't answer the High Priest.
 - c. He said He was the Christ, the Son of God.
2. After deciding Jesus should die, the religious leaders:
 - a. Expressed their surprise because they thought He was a nice guy.
 - b. Vented their anger on Him by spitting on Him, beating Him, and slapping Him around.
 - c. Prayed for God's will to be done in this matter.

3. While waiting in the High Priest's courtyard, Peter:
 - a. Beat up some of the people that had arrested Jesus.
 - b. Told others about their Savior.
 - c. Cursed, swore, and denied even knowing Jesus.

Things to Consider...

In his account of Peter's denial, the evangelist Luke includes the following detail: *"Peter replied, 'Man, I don't know what you're talking about!' Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him..."* (Luke 22:60-61). What expression did Peter see on the Lord's face? How do you think Peter felt?

Conclusion

Throughout our Lord's last week of ministry, angry religious leaders and His own knowledge about what He was going to be suffering confronted him. In spite of that, His concern was always directed toward others—the crowds that gathered around Him and, of course, His disciples. The words of John 3:16 sum up the love that our Lord exhibited: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* That life is yours in His Name.

Answers to Questions

Jesus in the Garden

1. *Jesus was angry because He knew that all of the disciples would run away from Him when the going got tough.* NO
2. *By his response, Peter showed that he really did not understand that what was taking place and what would take place had been foretold and was now happening in fulfillment of Scripture.* YES
3. *Jesus' prayer in the garden teaches us that obedience to God's will is more important than getting our way.* YES

Peter Finds that Jesus' Words were True!

1. *Why did the Jewish leaders think Jesus should be put to death?*
 - c. *He said He was the Christ, the Son of God.*

2. *After deciding Jesus should die, the religious leaders:*
 - b. *Vented their anger on Him by spitting on Him, beating Him, and slapping Him around.*

3. *While waiting in the High Priest's courtyard, Peter:*
 - c. *Cursed, swore, and denied ever even knowing Jesus.*

Notes: